

KURUN

AROUND THE WORLD

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Translated from the French

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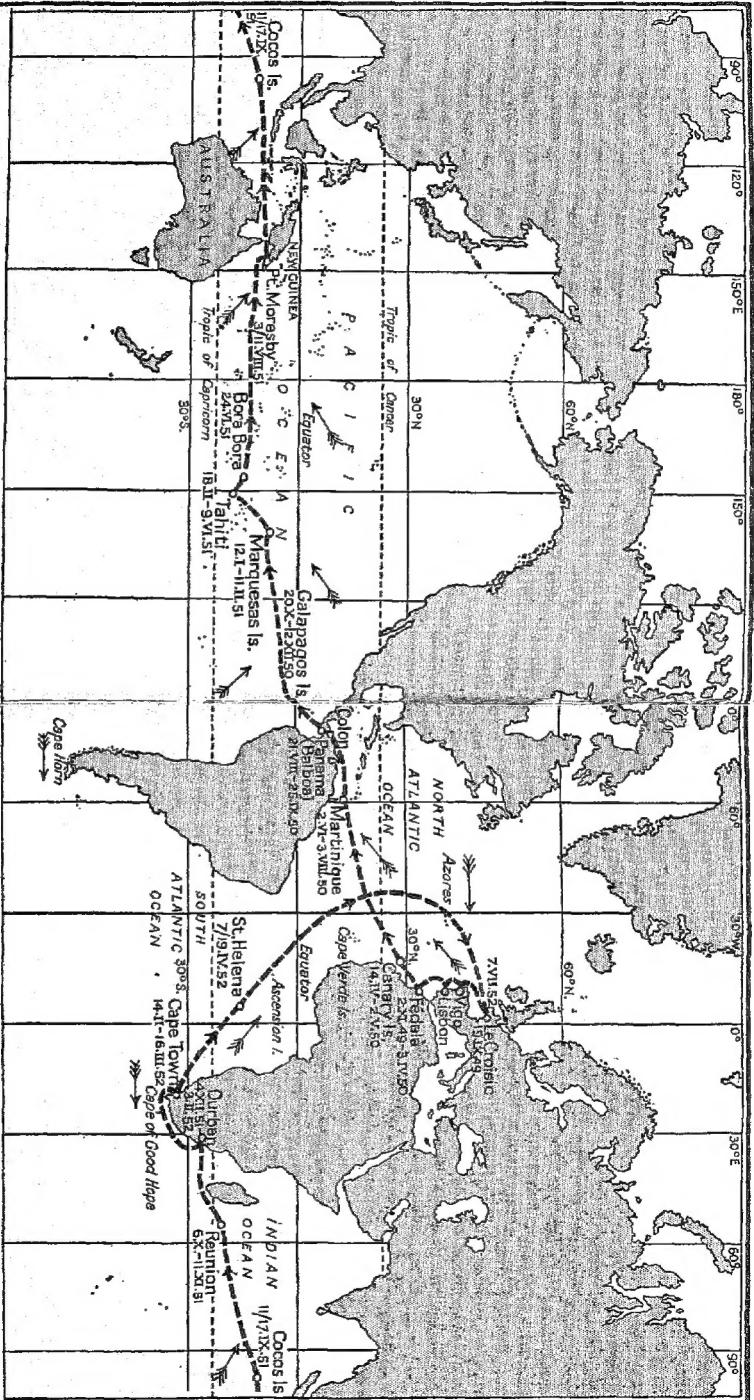
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La Plata to Rio Grande: 1,100 miles (44 days) — Brazil to Camary Is.: 360 miles (1 day) — Camary Is. to Martinique: 12,750 miles (30 days) — Martinique to Colon: 1,250 miles (14 days) — La Plata to the Galapagos Is.: 850 miles (as days) — Brazil to Camary Is.: 360 miles (1 day) — Martinique to Colon: 1,250 miles (14 days) — Galapagos Is. to Marquesas Is.: 3,000 miles (as days) — Marquesas Is. to Tahiti: 800 miles (1 day) — Tahiti to Durban: 140 miles (24 days) — Durban to Port Moresby: 3750 miles (as days) — Note Is. to the Cocos Is.: 3100 miles (Galapagos) — Cocos Is. to Réunion: 2,500 miles (as days) — Réunion to Durban: 140 miles (24 days) — Cape Town to St. Helena: 1,720 miles (22 days) — St. Helena to Le Croisic: 5,600 miles (73 days) ← → Trade winds and prevalent winds

TO MY FATHER
TO MY MOTHER
AND TO ALL WHO SAIL

CHAPTER I

VOCATION

Three things are primitively contemporaneous: Man, Liberty and Light

BARDIC TRIAD

By the irony of fate, I was born a long way from the sea—in Paris, on a fine summer's day, just after the First World War. My mother came from St. Malo in Brittany, a lordly granite fortress, former home of famous navigators and corsairs such as Cartier, Duguay-Trouin, Surcouf. My father was born on the other shore of Brittany, the region of the massacre, as ill luck had it, of the Gauls of Morbihan by the legions of Julius Caesar whose materialistic civilization soon reduced Druidic wisdom to no more than a bloodstained memory.

Brittany was originally called Armorica. Ar Mor: the Sea. Could a country possess a more beautiful name? My ancestral home is encompassed by the sea. And so jagged is its coastline that at every point the sea thrusts in to form a multitude of bays and estuaries. Ebb and flow are Brittany's breath of life. No Breton lives who has not some drops of salt water in his blood; even the peasant who inhabits the heaths or the remnants of the primeval forest which lie at the furthest point from the sea shore, ignorant of the sea as he is, scents the salt in the wind. The sea is ever-present.

I am, then, a Breton, and I believe I have a Breton character: calm but passionate, serious to the point of heaviness, yet dreamy and imaginative, inclined to adventure but to adventure well-planned and organized.

My childhood was partly passed in Paris, a place I came instinctively to detest. It lacked space and fresh air. I had no liking for my school, and the only part of the year that I found interesting was the three months I spent every year by the sea. My father was a deep-sea captain, passionately fond of sea and sail. He had known the grand days of sail, had made long voyages in square-rigs. From infancy, therefore, I had before me the example of foresight

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and prudence, those fine qualities of old-time seamanship. My father would repeat over and over again the English axiom: 'Take no chances—safety first.'

My first experience of the sea is so remote that I cannot recollect it. I learned to walk on the seashore; I have the feeling that there never was a time when I could not tie a sailor's knots, splice a rope, scull a boat over the stern, or steer any craft, and that I have always despised the landlubbers who couldn't. I can still see myself, scarcely taller than the barrel in which we kept the bait, sailing on a sea that seemed limitless, or returning, dog-tired, from a fishing trip, laboriously climbing up landing stages and up the granite quays of Le Croisic that then appeared so tremendously high to me. Or I see myself in a rowing boat rigged with some haphazard piece of canvas. That was the purest magic: to move forward without sound, without effort, without help from anyone—with the aid merely of a piece of sail-cloth.

I was a stubborn lad, a fighter, eager to redress wrongs, touchy, shy, idealistic, a whole-hogger. I recoiled from telling lies and hated liars. At the age of fourteen, my education had provided me with a number of over-simplified principles which I accepted as absolute. I was convinced that people could be divided into two camps: the virtuous and the wicked. I believed that the established hierarchy of classes sprang from an immutable order which it was needless even to discuss. Brought up in a Catholic and bourgeois milieu, I held as a matter of course several beliefs as absolute truths and I held them with fervour.

My faith in my country—*La Patrie*—was similarly elementary. The chaotic spectacle of governments, in the years before the war, governments in which corruption and scandals were blatant, utterly disgusted me. I felt that it was imperative that the regime should be overthrown, the right sort of people put in power and the monarchy re-established.

I hurled myself into achieving this. And the result was soon apparent. I was scarcely fifteen before I found myself hauled into court. The affair in which I had become involved made a considerable stir and the newspapers were full of it. In court I defended myself to the best of my ability, and one of the newspapers that reported the proceedings in full spoke of me as the Pocket Napoleon—which was not so derisory, after all!

SCHOOLDAYS

I was acquitted as ‘having acted without discernment’ (as if a lad of fifteen could be said to lack discernment), but my parents decided to send me to a boarding school in the provinces.

In a way, these incidents were providential. They enabled me to perceive how sordid the trappings of both politics and its justice were. The number of the virtuous had in my view grown decidedly fewer.

Having recruited my energies with three months of ‘wild life’, sailing, fishing, shooting, I returned to the senior form of my boarding school. It was a gloomy institution. The food was meagre and few occasions offered themselves for talk; at meal-times books were read to us and at play-time we had to ‘play’. Often on winter nights, in the huge, icy dormitory, I lay listening to the sound of the sea, to the plaint of the wind, falling asleep at last with clenched fists. I contemplated running away more than once, but I could see no logical ending to such an escapade, and I did not want to give my parents more worry. And, in the long run, the atmosphere of that school benefited the development of my personality: it forced me to reflect, to become conscious of my own self. I fell ill and missed the October examinations.

The next school year saw me back in Paris at the Lycée Louis le Grand. It was not to be a full year, for I began it late and fell seriously ill again in the spring. However, I had been admitted. And I immediately went back to the sea.

After a far too short period of solitude in the sun and open air, I returned to the grey walls of the Louis le Grand. Elementary maths—a poor year’s work, but a year that was rich in dreams. I became interested in philosophy—not for examination purposes (to my parents’ considerable regret) but for my own enjoyment. I began to know, to reason. In general, my philosophy was pessimistic. I was misanthropic, filled with loathing for my fellow-men. Modern existence seemed to me an intolerable chaos. More and more I withdrew into myself, spending hours in day-dreaming. City life, flat and unhealthy (in every sense of the word), nauseated me. I was not cut out for this world. The ‘success’ of which people prated—get a job and earn money—seemed more and more puerile. In my case, it was not my aim. The very word ‘success’ provoked me to mocking laughter. The honest blue of the skies drew my eyes.

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My love of Sea and Sail was deep, and for myself I could envisage only the life of a sailor. Was I not a sailor already? But the thought of a 'maritime career' did not fill me with enthusiasm; I detested the floating accumulations of ironmongery that were now voyaging on the oceans—outrages to beauty and to life itself.

I was longing for space, vistas unspoilt by the pride and cupidity of man. There were such places. I dreamed of faraway coasts that had not yet been picked over by man, claiming all he sees as his. My imagination dwelt on distant, unexplored vastnesses.

The next school year, 1937-1938, saw me back in Paris at the Lycée Louis le Grand: then the idea of my voyage, an idea that had long been latent, emerged in a definite form. I knew of Captain Bernicot's magnificent *Anahita*, which had recently set out on a long trip. 'One day,' I said to myself, 'I too shall set out, alone, in a craft of my own, my very own boat. I shall sail round the world, master of my destiny. And I shall never return to Europe.'

But I was young, I had no money, and I was aware that I had still much to learn of navigation. 'No matter, one day I shall sail away.'

Perhaps I was looking too far ahead. While the June examinations were on, I used to go to the Bois de Boulogne to listen to the birds singing far from the examination room. The October examinations drew on, but by then I was at sea. The absence of my father on a mission abroad had favoured my escapade. Later on I succeeded in passing the second part of my matriculation like everybody else. The only thing left for me to do now was to prepare for the entrance examination to the Naval School. I set to work, but the inattentive ways of study into which I had drifted proved to be a serious handicap and were difficult to shake off. I confess that I did not deserve to be admitted. Yet I thought that if I could get into the Navy, I could stay in it long enough to complete my training, saving money meanwhile until I could buy myself some craft and become my own master.

In 1940 the Naval School's examination was interrupted as soon as the Germans invaded Brittany, thus solving my problem. I had no intention of falling into the hands of the invaders, and, after having assisted refugees for some days, I became one myself. I pitched my tent in the heart of some shooting preserves with my

THE GERMAN OCCUPATION

best friend—later this would have been described as going into the maquis. Before long, we decided to make for Arcachon, where I was to select a good boat which we would use to escape from the country. We set out on foot but were overtaken by the Germans. By easy stages, I made my way back to Brittany alone.

At the time of the year when migrating birds pass overhead, I found myself at Nantes, attending the National School of Maritime Navigation. I was pleased to be studying navigation proper; the examination for the Naval School that I had sat for previously had had no bearing at all on seamanship or the sea.

One day, I bought a book, *Sailing Alone Around the World*, recently translated into French by my friend, Paul Budker. In it, Captain Slocum tells the story of his extraordinary voyage round the world from 1895 to 1898, during the heyday, therefore, of sail, when voyages were exciting, full of adventure. The book's effect on me was electrical. Those plans I had nursed for a distant future, for the time when I should have completed years of professional training—why should I not carry them out immediately?

I learned a lot about ships that year, the sort of things that are not taught in schools. I was studying to learn, not merely to pass examinations, and, in company with several of my classmates, I failed in the exams. There was at that time a curious spirit prevailing among our examiners; a number of promising young sailors were disheartened, a shortsighted policy that was to make itself felt a few years later in a serious dearth of ship's officers. No one at the time seemed to realize that paper qualifications do not make sailors, nor that diplomas do not enhance the nautical qualities of men or ships.

So back I went to Le Croisic to fit out my little two-ton cutter, *Crabe*, for fishing purposes and to muse on the fine yacht I was hoping one day to build.

One day, coming back from sea, I was attracted, as if by a magnet, to a wonderful new fishing boat, a sailing vessel that was gently pulling at her anchor in the roads. I circled round her. A connoisseur, I was able to admire the skill with which she had been fashioned. I studied her harmonious lines, strong without heaviness. How well she rode; her well-protected bows, her pronounced sheer, proclaimed her outstanding seaworthiness. Her name was

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Marie. With her fresh paint, her neat, trim rigging, *Marie* had the beauty of a young woman.

I fell in love with her forthwith. And in my notebook, on June 6th, 1941, at 10.45 p.m., I wrote a reminder to myself, 'I shall set out alone, in a craft like *Marie*.'

Without delay, I went to see old Bureau, the shipwright who had built her, a man I had known from my earliest days. His work was superior to anything I could even plan. Why look elsewhere? This was no longer a dreaming matter, this was reality. I wanted a ship like *Marie*, and even though I had no money, her price seemed reasonable enough.

In the autumn, after a few war-time adventures, I sold my *Crabe* and took her to Nantes to the man who had bought her. I was no longer hankering to enter for examinations when the examiners were hair-splitting mathematicians who enjoyed playing cat and mouse with wretched candidates. Let them try and catch the devil with a marlin-hitch!

It was a wrench to part with my old friend, but I returned on foot to Le Croisic with plenty of hope for the future.

To engage in building and fitting out a deep-sea sailing vessel in war-time, during enemy occupation, was a bold undertaking, as I was quickly to discover. It proved impossible to place the order for the boat's construction, and I had to postpone my plans. And there I was, in a slightly ridiculous situation, left with nothing now that I had sold my *Crabe*. To pass the time, I signed on at St. Malo as a deep-sea fisherman in a large Newfoundland trawler. The owners had been compelled to cease sending their trawlers out to Newfoundland. Too many of them were being lost: captured or sunk, often in dramatic circumstances, by the British. Those that escaped were despatched to a different destination: the West African Coast.

At Port de Bouc, together with my friend Jean-Michel Crolbois, I joined the trawler *Alfred* of 225 ft., with a crew of fifty-one. It was a hard life, one that left memories. When we came on board, the captain gave us a warning. 'Well, young men, you want to be deep-sea fishermen, eh? You don't know what you're in for.' We didn't. But we soon found out.

Yet I had read Father Yvon's book on the Newfoundlanders: 'It is man', he wrote, 'who is the slave of the machine. The

DEEP SEA FISHERMEN

machine can work night and day, so man must work night and day in uninterrupted hard labour as long as the fish are there. And the abundance of fish is sometimes such that the crew can only manage to get seven hours' rest in the space of three days, so that men are often seen staggering with sleep and fatigue. And then consider that in certain trawlers there are some two dozen young men under twenty. Poor lads!"

Fish, Fish!! Once the fishing grounds are reached, fish become an obsession. I have seen the deck covered in fish up to the rail, from the forecastle to the bridge. And all those fish floundering on the deck, some of them man size, had to be sorted, gutted, decapitated, filleted, washed and salted into the hold. I can still see myself at the work, which was painful and often dangerous: handling the otter boards and the treacherous steel warps, or at the rail watching the rolling of the ship while hauling the heavy trawl that had to be kept taut if it were not to be lost overboard along with all hands. Night and day we worked, without a break, two watches on deck and one for rest below. Sometimes it was 'all hands on deck', and there we would stay for twenty-four hours knee-deep in water and fish, unable to wash, our hands painfully raw (on one occasion, I was unable to cut myself a slice of bread because of the pain). At times I wept with anger and weariness.

Nevertheless, I grew attached to those Newfoundland fishermen, those forced labourers of the sea, with their rough exteriors and their generous hearts, comparable in so many respects to the men of the old-time sailing ships. These fishermen certainly worked the human machine to the limit of its endurance. This fishing season was useful to me in more than one way. It hardened my body and helped form my character.

After many an adventure and a sojourn in Senegal, I returned to France in the spring with a tidy sum of money in my pocket. I passed the theoretical part of my master's certificate. Free from care, I again began thinking of building my own ship. A special permit would be needed and patiently I set about overcoming the various obstacles.

While waiting for the end of what was of necessity a lengthy and slow-moving procedure, I bought myself a small half-decked cutter which I equipped for fishing, *Marilou*. I was not particularly lucky at the trade but I could at any rate keep sailing. First, I went

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out with an old pilot, Rimbaud, who had been a topman of the famous training frigate *Melpomène*; then with a former extra-master of a sailing ship, an old Cape Horner, Perré. My friend Jean-Michel often joined us.

After a long wait and many disappointments, in the spring of 1943 I at last received permission to start building. I had been collecting materials for some years, in readiness for that moment. It was no trifling matter, for shortages cropped up at every point. Everything could be bartered in the black market, but I had very little money.

I succeeded at last, after endless efforts, in having a keel cast at Quimperlé. That difficulty overcome, I then found it impossible to get it delivered at the shipwright's. In the end, I went and collected it with the pilot cutter belonging to Jean-Michel. We managed to hoist the keel on board at Douélan, but nearly ran the cutter aground as we started owing to a stupid manoeuvre forced on us by the Germans. We took the keel to Le Croisic. I landed and dragged it myself to the shipyard, the complete lack of means of transport forcing me to carry all the ship's gear on my back, often over considerable distances. As for the anchor, the only place where I could find one was in Paris, so I shouldered its load of sixty pounds and set off for the Gare Montparnasse. There the ticket-collector refused to allow me to board the train with it. I had to fight my way on.

So great was my faith that, little by little, slowly and laboriously, my paper plans became reality. On May 20th, old Bureau, the builder, made a start on my boat. By the 31st of the same month, the keel, the stem and the stern-post were assembled and the cast iron keel was fastened in place. I had abandoned fishing to devote myself exclusively to my noble task; the shipwright was now working without pause for me alone. He was putting his back into the job and I marvelled at his skill. He succeeded in building a hull that was so well-made that, apart from along the rabbet, there was not an inch of caulking in the seams. Tight as a bottle. A first-class job of work.

Soon the shell of my boat almost entirely filled the diminutive shipyard. On August 7th, the shores were knocked away, a cradle was placed under the keel, a large roller put under her bow and the tackle hooked on. The front of the shed had to be taken down

TONNERRE IS LAUNCHED

before the boat could be hauled out, and for the first time I could survey out in the open the beautiful hull I had so lovingly painted with my own hands. It looked a sturdy piece of work, a delight to the eye. My dream was taking shape. I was as happy as a child with a new toy. Soon my *Tonnerre* would be ready, a mighty ship that was to sail the seven seas.

October 28th, 1943. In the morning, at low-tide, we had moved the cutter on her cradle to the foreshore—the flow was to lift her off. I waited there alone, in the vast silence. The sea came up slowly, lapped the keel, then gently laved the hull. It was profoundly moving to me to see this ship—my ship—come to life as she made her first contact with her element. The keel grated once or twice on the pebbles of the shore and then the boat floated—frec. And at that very moment, a porpoise, which seemed to me a messenger from Neptune himself, bobbed up just astern: an unmistakable welcome.

November 27th. At nine o'clock in the morning, in a moderate breeze with all sail set, the cutter rounded Le Croisic jetty. I was enraptured when she began to pitch in the swell offshore. The sky was grey, winter was drawing near, but what of that? The sun shone in my heart.

I discovered straightaway that the boat had the devil in her and that she would need a considerable amount of ballast even when everything was on board. But how well she steered, and how quickly she responded! Some fishermen thought she had an engine.

In spite of a rigorous inspection by the Germans, I returned home in a daze of happiness.

I had laid up *Marilou* to await a purchaser. And until the day came that I should be able to set off on my voyage, I decided to fish. I had difficulty in finding a hand; I needed one since my boat had no engine. Maybe the professional fishermen thought me too much of an amateur: go fishing in a yacht! In the end I came to an agreement with an old sailor, one of a vanishing race, old Norbert Le Blond. He was good, upright and courageous, and the sea had long since yielded all its secrets to him. Unfortunately his physique had been weakened owing to his having fallen on bad times; he lived alone, in squalor, on a pension that was not enough to keep him in tobacco. In winter, he wandered about, his bare feet in

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clogs, a smile on his face in spite of his empty stomach. Together, we went out fishing nearly every day.

Gradually I settled down to sea life. I now lived permanently on board and methodically, without haste, I was gathering together all I needed. And one day, I found I was ready. Now, I thought, I could at last leave our cold winters behind me. Before the end of the summer, I would be heading to the south-west. Who was to stop me? I had the necessary charts, nautical documents, instruments and excellent equipment. For four years, I had been building up a stock of food by economising on my rations. I had enough to last me until I reached the West Indies.

A few hours—and I should be setting out. All that was left to do was to take in fresh water, bring the last boxes of food from their hiding place in a shed at home and stow them on board. After that, all I had to do was to give the Germans the slip, which would present no great difficulty.

But events upset my plan. The Allies landed in France and began to advance. All postal services were cut off, I was without news from my people, and I grew anxious as a wave of mad hatred swept our liberated country. Vengeance, masked by noble sentiments, stalked the land. I decided that I must find out how my people were, and set off for Paris from Le Croisic one morning on a borrowed bicycle. It hurt to leave my boat; I gave her a last loving look as she lay there, the outcome of all my hopes. Regretfully I pedalled away along the deserted roads, carrying as all my luggage my heavy shoes, shorts, shirt, a bag of woollen under-clothes, a few hundred francs, my knife and my revolver. A sad fellow I felt, going to survey the folly and wickedness of man.

As I drew further away from the sea, pedalling vigorously, I left silence and solitude for turmoil. I encountered hatred, injustice, lies, theft, murder and petty meanness. Allies or Frenchmen, Germans or Russians, Jews, Communists, Gaullists—all were hordes in a state of savage exultation. I found myself in a realm over which Evil held supreme sway.

It is dangerous to be independent. One must be either one thing or the other, on one side or on the other. The modern world is a great leveller and disapproves of those who defy classification.

When liberty had been consummated, or, in other words, when all revenge had been taken, I had opportunity to wonder what had

THE LIBERATION

happened to my ship. The Germans were still occupying the St. Nazaire pocket; the upshot was still in abeyance.

To one of my loyal friends, Jean Quilgars, had been delegated the guarding of my cutter which lay under his window; he had the key of the cabin. I was on the point of returning to Le Croisic when a message reached me. The Germans had searched my attic, had found my hidden store of arms and ammunition and had pillaged all my belongings. They had also seized my cutter. For me to return to Le Croisic, I was informed, would be courting death.

I was carried away by anger: I would make them pay for daring to lay hands on my boat. But I calmed down. 'If hatred responds to hatred, how can hatred cease?'

The Germans remained masters of the coast until the last day of the war, and many people were more eager to kill off 'traitors' haphazardly than they were to attack enemy troops.

As soon as the Germans had withdrawn, I returned to Le Croisic. My cutter had vanished without trace; no one could give me any information about her. One winter's day, she had been seen under sail with German naval personnel on board. She had never been seen again.

The French Navy assisted me to search the coast and I went on many a disheartening expedition, seeking, questioning. In vain I explored the estuary of the Loire above St. Nazaire. Sometimes I was sent on a false trail by people who had, or thought they had, recognized my cutter. After several weeks of tramping along roads and searching in harbours and in every place where a boat could be hidden, I was near despair.

On May 29th, sitting on the sandy beach of St. Marc at the mouth of the Loire, I was slowly eating the frugal meal my slender purse allowed me. Just enough left for lunch. The weather was brilliant, bright sunshine, blue sea, a caressing light breeze. But it was a sad gaze that I turned towards the horizon, for the day before, rummaging in the coastal villas occupied by the Germans, I had made an alarming discovery: two drawers from a locker in my cabin. I could only speculate on the fate of my cutter.

As I was strapping on my rucksack, a man came along, a sailor who knew all about ships. I showed him a series of photographs and without hesitation he picked out my cutter and even volunteered some details about the hull and the rigging from his

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phenomenal memory. The Germans had left her to her fate; she had been washed ashore and then systematically broken up for firewood. This information was like a blow on the head. The man led me to a shed in which the lifeboat was kept, and there I found some more drawers, together with some odds and ends and lengths of planking, some of which had been used to board up the windows. We went back to the beach, and there, among the rocks, I recognized some pigs of iron. This, then, must be the very place where my boat had foundered, where she split on the jagged rocks. I would rather the cliffs had fallen on me. My poor boat, how she must have suffered! No doubt there was a strong wind and the sea was rough—but her rigging had been sound. If I had been there, I should have been able to do something to avert her destruction, claw her off that murderous coast, or even, as a last resort, try to use the heavy anchor with the long cable bent on to the chain. Alas, I had not been there to fight her battle.

In the empty shed, I found the varnished tiller, still with hardly a scratch. I stroked it with my hand. Why hadn't they burnt that too? Was it respect? Or fear? For the helm of a sailing ship is the mystic link between her soul and that of her master. It is far more than a symbol. And, holding this relic of my dreams, I swore an oath: 'I shall rebuild you!'

On my return to Le Croisic, I was met by yet more bad news. Old Le Blond had been found dead of starvation. He had only had a hundred francs a month to live on. He must have met his end, smiling and resigned—Good old Le Blond! You must be there now, in the sailor's Paradise on board the great sailing ship of peace, running free before the eternal trade-winds over a miraculously blue sea with its white-capped waves. . . .

Some time later, I went back to St. Marc in the small sailing boat belonging to a friend with the idea of taking back to Le Croisic what was left of my ship. Everything I had found I had put together in the shed and had fixed a big notice just above the heap. There was nothing left when I went back that second time. The French Navy had taken it all. I was told: 'See those buoys out there? They anchored them with your pigs of iron.' I clenched my fists. 'I'll sink the lot of them,' I declared. But, of course, I didn't.

The weather on the return journey to Le Croisic was appalling. We spent a dirty night, without a stitch of sail, in squalls and

THE END OF TONNERRE

thunderstorms. Ashore, trees were uprooted. When we made sail again at daylight, we carried away the boom. The gods, it seemed were not yet satisfied.

At Le Croisic, I went back to my whitewashed attic, and on a bare wall I wrote in red the words of Kipling:

*If you can . . .
. . . watch the things you gave your life to broken
And stoop and build' em up with worn-out tools
. . . You'll be a Man, my son.*

CHAPTER II

BUILDING *KURUN*

A work is made possible by constant thinking about it

TIROU-VALLOUVAR

1937 TO 1945. All the effort of those years had come to nothing. Eight years had slipped by since my first dream of a long voyage; I had been within hours of setting forth. Now I was penniless, and worse, for I had a few small debts. It was no wonder that I had moments of deep discouragement. But friends had stood by me. Jean Quilgars had done all within his power to save my boat, taking from her all he could under the very noses of the Germans: clothes, linen, books, instruments, equipment. One German of the Kriegsmarine, a real seaman who had been a deep-sea fisherman, had carefully removed my sextant and entrusted it to Quilgars. It had belonged to my father and I was particularly pleased to have it back.

And then old Bureau, understanding my grief, offered to build me a new boat. 'You pay me when you have some money,' he said, '—one day.' It was a tempting proposal, but I was reluctant to agree to it. For there was another possibility. The *Tonneire* had been equipped as a fishing vessel, and I had been registered as a fisherman. As such, I had compensation rights, and I began to work on a claim for war damage. I remember June 9th as the lucky date on which I met M. Leroux, the friend of a friend, who had taken over the shipyard of old Bihoré at Le Croisic on a long lease. He offered to build me a new boat on very fair terms, payment to be made out of any war damage money I might collect.

His yard manager, Jean Moullec, had been a shipwright and was expert at his work. I accepted the offer and was again able to indulge in visions of my ship growing before my eyes. On the 13th of June, I consulted Dervin, the naval architect, who received me with his customary charm and freely gave me his advice. But it all proved too good to be true. On the 15th, I was informed that

THE PLANS

the 1940 group, to which I belonged, was due for call-up that August. My dreams evaporated in the glare of reality.

On August 10th, I presented myself at the naval station at Vannes. In spite of an outwardly calm mien, I was inwardly seething at the thought of thirty months' servitude. A black gap of two and a half years in my life. Fortunately, before long, the decision was taken to reduce the term of service to six months, and I cooled down.

I did not cease to think of my boat and I devoted every free moment to her. But then came more trouble. I was told that I was being sent to Africa, which would make any work on the plans of my boat impossible. I went and threw myself on the mercy of my commanding officer, who showed understanding and arranged for me to stay in France. I was appointed to a naval transport and a trip to England made it possible for me to spend the little money I had on certain items which were unobtainable in France. The last part of my call-up I served in Paris. On February 2nd, 1946, I was demobilized and was free to set to work again. I pressed my war damage claim, a laborious, endless task. On May 1st, Dervin handed me the plans. My boat was no longer a vague ideal: it had been conceived and every detail had been planned. We had decided not to rebuild a replica of the lost *Tonnerre*, although on the whole she had been an excellent craft: stable, fast, well-balanced, easily handled, comfortable, the sound sea-going craft I had hoped she would be. But perhaps a little small for an ocean voyage—for that I could have wished her a little longer.

Kurun is a sailing ship pure and simple, and I would have considered it a sacrilege to have an engine put in her—a mass of iron-ware lodged in her fine oaken hull. Sails are the most beautiful means of locomotion, enabling man to feel the forces of nature and to utilise them. They bring him nearer to life and develop in him his more subtle senses. Naturally they demand a long initiation into the laws of Aeolus and Neptune, laws which must be known and studied in their most minute, often inexplicable, details. The sailing man must have knowledge and, before all, the knowledge to foresee. Sail is a wonderful school.

I had asked Dervin only for a sheer and body plan. He insisted on giving me a sail plan and a building plan as well. Even on paper, there was definitely a boat, but her building was to be a

BUILDING *KURUN*

long, laborious process, bringing many disappointments. There were still great shortages in France; everywhere the black market flourished. My shipbuilder had his own worries which prevented him from giving the wholehearted attention to my boat that I would have wished. And the war damage compensation on which I had counted to pay for the expenses of building, fitting out and equipping *Kurun* proved an exceedingly complicated matter that dragged on in spite of the preferential consideration supposed to be given to fishermen. And every delay was catastrophic as inflation followed upon inflation like ocean rollers.

Painfully, patiently, piece by piece, *Kurun* grew. At first, there was no wood, and then there were no bolts. The shed in which *Kurun* was being built was still unfinished.

As everything was hanging fire, I decided to go back to fishing, for after all I had to eat. I became the owner of a small sailing dinghy, *Tabou*, which one of my friends sold me for 15,000 francs (then the equivalent of £31) as a friendly gesture.

On September 9th, 1946, miraculously, work was begun on *Kurun*. The start was made in a neighbouring shipyard, for there was no room to spare at the Leroux yard. Moullec and I began by marking off the outline of the boat on a smooth, level plank floor. Excited though we were, we had to work carefully from the plan that was on a scale of one tenth. What struck me most was how small the boat was going to be. The following days saw the making of the moulds and the shaping of the keel. We cut the stem, the stemson and the deadwood aft. It was a fine beginning, but it was to remain a beginning for some time.

On December 29th, the iron keel, cast through the kindness of the Dubigeon yard at Nantes, arrived at Le Croisic. The keel bolts caused us some setbacks through having to be remade; finally the keel was put in place on January 21st, 1947. Another halt before the moulds were set up at the end of March. Work did not really get going until May; and then it was fascinating to watch Moullec and Marcel go at it. They were both masters of adze and plane and my continual presence and incessant stress on perfection must have been very irritating to them. More than once, Moullec and Marcel, headstrong Bretons both, grumbled; but we became firm friends, for we shared an ideal.

We had some trouble in getting acacia wood for the timbers,

THE WORK PROGRESSES

and the bolts let us down time and time again; one after the other, we had to reforge them. On May 29th, we began putting in the timbers (1 ft. 6 in. by 1 ft. 8 in.), four of us bending them round as they came warm from the steam-box. That night, forty-four frames were in place; two days later the last one was put in place. It was a magnificent piece of building. Little by little, the skeleton began to look like a hull.

July 9th was a great day. It rained and there was a storm at sea. Clouds scudded low over the harbour. It was the right weather for the child of *Tonnerre* to make her appearance in the open. That morning the cutter was taken out of the shed and for the first time I was able to admire her, for until then I had only just been able to squeeze round her.

Everyone was pleased with her. There was nothing to offend the eye. I circled round her, examining her from every angle. She was perfect. She was left at the top of the beach from which I had launched *Tonnerre*. The launch of *Kurun* was not to take place yet awhile, not for another month or so, for none of her iron fittings had been put in and she could not be launched as she was.

I did not remain inactive, but went on working with putty and paint; autumn came before the yard began to attend to details.

Towards the end of February, the launching of *Kurun* became a necessity, for Moullec had to launch a trawler and my cutter was in the way. The blacksmith had only had time to fix the rudder hinges and the chainplates for the shrouds. I had been insisting that everything must first be finished, but, after long discussion, it was decided to launch her.

It was cold on that February morning, the 26th, with the north-east wind blowing. I arrived at the yard early. The hull had to be moved on greased rollers down to the foreshore at low tide. I was of little use, for I had stupidly broken a small bone in my foot a short while before, and the doctor insisted on immobility, but there were plenty of willing hands. Several friends and a number of the fishermen had come along to help.

She gave us a lot of trouble. First of all, she shot away on her own, and the launching cradle, though held back by a block and tackle at the top of the beach, broke. Clinging to the deck, I had some nasty moments: she fell over and lay on her side—fortunately without getting a scratch, for the keel, ploughing a foot deep

BUILDING *KURUN*

through the sand, had taken the shock. Moullec, skilled in applying force the right way, soon had everything under control again. A few hours later, the boat lay awaiting the incoming tide.

It was a spring tide, and the flow came in fast. It was soon swirling round the keel. Together with several friends, I was on deck, feeling the hull gradually righting itself with an ease that gave an indication of its great stability. At last, at 4.30 p.m., after the keel had grated a little on the beach, my cutter floated free. In the violent current, she swung rapidly round on the anchor I had laid out before. It was intensely exciting—and moving. As a symbolic gesture, I broke over the stem a bottle in which I had carefully preserved water drawn at St. Marc at the place where my first boat had been cast ashore.

October 28th, 1943—February 26th, 1948. On the same beach within half a cable's length, *Kurun* was taking the place of *Tonnerre*. More than four years of my life, bringing many a disappointment. But now this fine boat was afloat. And I was happy.

My first trial trip was not made until June 13th. The weather was fine, and I had invited a few friends to share my jubilation. The sails set, we started off in regulation style, without a flaw. We had a head wind so that we had to beat out of harbour. I did not yet know how the boat would respond. I let her fill and she began to gather headway. With beating heart, I put down the helm to go about, and, even in the very light breeze, *Kurun* obeyed. We noted that the wake was insignificant, that the cutter's only wish was to gather speed.

It was a fine trip. We came back late in the evening in a freshening breeze which allowed the boat to display her speed. She was plainly in need of more ballast, but then the hull was still practically empty. After my friends had gone, I tidied up, and slept peacefully.

A short time afterward, I made my first trip alone. Keen as I was on sailing, I did not stay out long that first time. The breeze was freshening, and the weather looked like getting worse. I was tired and did not look forward to spending a night at sea in those conditions, certainly not on board so wild a boat. I came back at half tide on a fresh north-westerly breeze. I spent the night on board but could not get a wink of sleep on the hard bunk. The weather had taken a turn for the worse: all night I listened to the

TRIAL TRIPS

wind whistling in the rigging and the patter of rain on the cabin top.

In spite of outward appearance, there was still much to be done to *Kurun* before she would be ready to set out and, in fact, that was not until the autumn of the following year. Everything looked impeccable—clean and neat. Then was the time to settle on board, I decided, and I shipped all I needed for the voyage—which was no small amount. I had pondered over every single detail to such an extent that some of my friends laughed at me.

The dream of my adolescence was about to come true: to circumnavigate the earth in a sailing vessel of my own. But there was a difference between the dream of a lad of seventeen and that of a man of twenty-nine.

On board my ship, I felt that I had finished with life on land and that, in a way, I was disengaging myself from social life altogether. The years that had passed had brought me much and in spite of appearances had been rich and fruitful.

The care of my boat had freed me from practically all other desires. I had disciplined myself, had learned to think straight, to know myself, to judge the modern world. I was ready to depart.

CHAPTER III

WEIGHING ANCHOR: FIRST PORTS OF CALL

My wish had always been to set out alone. While I was building *Tonnerre* and later *Kurun*, various friends had offered to share in my future voyage. Theirs were passing enthusiasms with no solid basis. As my preparations progressed, it seemed clear that by the time I went I should not have a penny-piece left. I had fought desperately to secure my war damage compensation, and though I had succeeded in drawing the bulk of it, I had begun to despair of getting the remainder which would have solved my difficulties. But I refused to be disheartened. All I lacked now were my English stores. A fisherman from the Ile de Sein who had called in at a Cornish harbour at last managed to collect them for me.

My parents, as the date of my departure drew nearer, became more and more worried about my going alone. On August 13th, they sent me Gaston Dufour. His uncle was a friend of my family, and knowing he wanted to sail, they had suggested he should join me. Dufour was a young man of twenty-five, of good family, who had recently returned from Indo-China where he had been fighting for a couple of years. He was robust and athletic, had sailed in a variety of small yachts and knew how to steer a boat. The impression he made on me was favourable.

On September 4th, I went to Paris to say goodbye to my people and to tell them that I had decided to take Dufour with me. Some last errands remained to be done in the capital: at the Hydrographic Department I bought a batch of necessary nautical documents. For lack of money, I was unable to acquire the charts relating to the second part of my voyage, which was to cause me considerable trouble later. But it could not be helped.

On the 7th, I returned to Le Croisic and took the last essentials—books, clothes, food stores—on board. I found places for everything and made all secure. The boat, incredibly full, was lying just a little deep.

THE VOYAGE BEGINS

On the 13th, in the afternoon, Dufour came and settled on board. Eager to start, he was quite impatient at having to stay for a few more days at Le Croisic. I still had some business to settle and was awaiting a last visit from my father. In any case, the weather was not favourable for setting out and I had to postpone leaving until the middle of September. I finally chose the afternoon of the 19th.

That last morning was occupied in running around, shopping and taking in fresh water. I paid off all my debts and had a last lunch ashore with my father. Le Croisic, after its summer visitors had gone, was a peaceful place. I walked through the silent streets, musing that the little harbour town seemed calmer and more attractive than ever with its old houses and granite quays. It was a day like others, already grey, less warm, a tinge of autumn chill in the air.

My departure went unnoticed. I do not care for chatter and I had kept my own counsel. To my acquaintances, I had gone so far as to say, a few days before, that I might try for Morocco.

A very few intimate friends who knew my plans but had not divulged them came to the water's edge. That was how I wanted it: *Kurun* should slip away quietly, unobserved. My father was busy stowing the boat's keg on the cabin top and my friends gathered round me: André Bligné and Jean Quilgars; Jano, just returned from a fishing trip in his small launch *L'Indomptable*; Jean-Marc Eudel, an older man and a good friend; with them a few members of my family, a few friends of Dufour's, a girl and some children. I had not wanted my mother to be present.

The ebb had started. 4 p.m.: ready to go. Let go forward. I set No. 2 jib and slipped the rope that held the stern to the ladder of the quay. In the current of air forced back from the houses, the cutter swung round almost imperceptibly. My friends, anxious to lend a last hand, hoisted the mainsail. *Kurun* moved towards the mouth of the harbour basin, very slowly, so slowly that it was as if she were reluctant to leave her habitual setting.

Then, suddenly, she caught the breeze and came to life, gathering way immediately. The quay, the landing stage, the long granite pier, all glided past my eyes as in a dream. I threw a last backward glance at the harbour, the old roofs, the tall steeple. From the lighthouse, a friendly hand waved a last farewell.

WEIGHING ANCHOR: FIRST PORTS OF GALL

My small pennant, which I rarely fly, flapped proudly at the mast head. Once we had rounded the lighthouse, the long jetty soon cut off our view of the harbour. My eyes were now fixed on the sea ahead.

There was a moderate breeze, but the cutter, carrying her sail well, made good progress. Alongside, a few fathoms from us, *L'Indomptable* escorted us, both boats heading west. Though we were glad to have been together, the time came for us to separate. Near Basse Castouillet, we parted—partings at sea, on a heaving deck, have a strange pathos. When I kissed my father goodbye, he muttered, ‘Be prudent!’ and then stepped into the other craft. I remained at the helm. Dufour joined me.

We were still following the same course. Jano could not resign himself to turn round, but the lighthouse of Le Croisic was receding on the horizon, and at last with a firm gesture he put the helm hard over. Rapidly, the distance between cutter and launch increased. My eyes followed her white hull for a long time. We were now alone at sea. All the fishermen had returned to harbour. Fine, mild weather, light breeze from south-south-west.

At 5.40 p.m., we passed within a cable's length of the familiar buoy of the Bonen du Four. Towards nightfall, the sky began to wear an ugly look, an indication of dirty weather to come. The weather forecast had been far from reassuring, as it happened, and my father had gone so far as to advise me to seek the shelter of Belle Ile to watch developments. At nightfall, I changed No. 2 jib for No. 3.

Weary, I allowed Dufour to take over the helm and went to lie down on my bunk. A few moments later, I regretted having done so and got up again. It was as well I did, for my companion was steering perfectly well but to the north-west instead of to the south-west. I quickly corrected his error which might have had serious consequences, as we were heading straight for the rocks. I sent Dufour below to get some rest and decided to look after the ship myself until we were well clear of the land.

At midnight, I streamed the log and entered our position on the chart. The wind had backed to the south, then south-south-east. *Kurun* was obediently following the course planned for her on the chart.

At 1 a.m. I woke Dufour to relieve me at the helm and went below.

FIRST NIGHT AT SEA

The lights were clear on the horizon. I dozed, but I could feel the wind freshening into squalls that brought rain. After a while, I had to go back on deck to roll down three turns in the mainsail. I went below again, but not for long, for the weather was deteriorating. At about 2.30 a.m., my companion called me on deck—he had allowed matters to get out of hand: the lee rail was in the water and the sea was washing up to the top of the cabin roof. On a night like that, this was certainly no job for a beginner. He kept on urging me, ‘Hurry! Hurry!’, but as I knew the boat was not going to capsize, I took my time donning my oilskins and came up without undue haste. It was the best way of inspiring confidence in my companion. I went forward and hauled down the staysail, then reefed the mainsail right down, rolling it seven turns. *Kurun* was tamed. ‘Go on, blow!’ I said to the wind, ‘and see if you can turn *Kurun* over now!’

I had sent Dufour below as he was feeling seasick. The last part of that night was not pleasant—violent squalls with heavy down-pours. A breaking sea got up, and I lay the cutter to, heading to the south-west, checking the mainsheet so that it did not fill too much, for I still had more canvas than was warranted; the small craft quivered as the gusts struck her, but I had every confidence in her strength. Nothing could go wrong!

With the dawn, the weather looked menacing in every quarter. ‘High dawn, low sails,’ is the saying. A few moments later, the veiled sun was showing through its shrouds: ‘Sun and shrouds—rain and wind,’ they say. The prospect was none too pleasant. My companion was unlikely to be at his best for some time, and I was tired—had been tired from the start—for I had been unable to sleep for the past few nights. At 6 a.m. I decided to tack about and make for Belle Ile, which was at that moment still out of sight.

Towards the end of the morning, the wind having eased, I was able to shake out the reefs in the mainsail. We rounded Point Kerdonis, sailing close under it with the wind freshening again, but *Kurun* was now running toward shelter.

To get ready for anchoring, I had to go below into the forepeak, and, with the tiller lashed, the boat was off her course and lurching wildly in the gusts of wind. The piers of Le Palais were now clearly in sight and I woke Dufour, who did not know at first

WEIGHING ANCHOR: FIRST PORTS OF CALL

exactly where he was. At that moment, a large motor-boat, that must have taken shelter in the harbour that night, came by—she was from Le Croisic, and we greeted one another with delight. At half-past twelve, I dropped anchor just by the north pier.

I had been well advised to seek shelter: the weather grew worse, south-westerly gale in the Bay of Biscay. As I watched the clouds racing over the citadel dominating the harbour, I began to realize how formidable crossing the Bay was so late in the season.

We had to stay at Belle Ile for several days. The weather continued uncertain and stormy, and at night the squalls alternated with rain-storms. Head winds, or nearly so, offered us no temptation to set out.

Belle Ile is an exceedingly beautiful island. The coast is picturesque with its little coves and inlets, and a beach in close proximity to rural scenery.

On the 24th, the sky began to clear; on the 25th, the glass rose; the landward breeze began to steady. That Sunday morning, we caught a glimpse of the latest French yacht, a thoroughbred, *Farewell* of M. Marin. I conjectured that it was *Farewell's* trip home before being laid up for the winter. We, in *Kurun*, were just setting out! It was an odd feeling—we were on our way. Le Croisic was already far behind us.

On the 26th, I decided we could leave, and, having taken in fresh water and some fresh victuals, I had everything ready by an early hour. The weather kept fine, but the wind had dropped altogether. The barometer stood steady at 30.28. I was certain, however, that the wind would soon get up, and at 4.10 p.m. we got under way. Not a ripple on the water. Slowly I sculled *Kurun* out of the harbour and, a few cables outside, boated the oar. There was now nothing to do but wait.

The tide carried us first towards Taillefer Point and then in the opposite direction toward Point Kerdonis. All we could do was to enjoy the evening. It was a splendid sunset.

Just before 9 p.m., a slight air off the mainland stole up to us. I was expecting it and had set all sail. This was our real start.

At 11 p.m. I streamed the log and noted our position on the chart. The breeze freshened from the north-east and the log began to spin faster. The sky was clear, and constantly swept by the powerful beam of the Goulphar lighthouse which, a few hours

LAST SIGHT OF FRANCE

later, was no more than a vague glow above the horizon: the last gleam of the shore, of France.

When dawn broke, there was nothing but the sea; *Kurun* was alone on the immensity of waters. She was making a nice wake, for the wind had grown steadily stronger, veering to the east.

I had a letter on board that was not to be opened within forty miles of land. As we were leaving, a girl had asked me for details about my voyage. 'It's a secret,' I told her; 'instructions are, according to ancient custom, contained in sealed orders. I shall not be allowed to see them until I am forty miles out at sea,' whereupon she had handed me a note that was not to be opened until the moment of consulting the sealed orders. Now I read her salutation, 'Fair winds and smooth seas!'

Dufour was asleep. I was alone at the helm and *Kurun* seemed very small and fragile in this vast expanse, a few square yards of planking. Surely it was madness to attempt circumnavigating the earth in her. Judged by the scale of man, the earth was huge. An inner voice was warning me, 'You have taken leave of your senses, go back!' But an unseen force urged me on. My hand held the helm on the course, S. 62 W. magnetic.

At 9 a.m. a steamer, northward bound, crossed our bows, and that afternoon we encountered our first tunny-fishers.

The weather was continuing fine. Dufour and I took turns at the helm, for it was impossible to let the boat steer herself. I noticed with satisfaction that Dufour was an excellent helmsman and kept to his course perfectly, no easy task with the wind aft.

September 28th, 1949. A wonderful night, the sky glittering with stars. I steered by one of them. A good breeze. It was a pleasure to see the log turning.

In the morning, the breeze freshened, the sea was rising and the sky was beginning to lower. Towards midday, the wind eased, then dropped. Before long, we lay becalmed; at 2.45 p.m., all sail had to be taken in, for the rigging was chafing in the swell. We availed ourselves of this respite to turn in early. We lit the navigation lights and slept.

September 29th. A light breeze having got up in the east, I went on deck at 3.15 a.m. to set the sails and resume our course. Gradually the breeze strengthened and, with the dawn, visibility became poor. I had a shock when I glanced at the rigging: the jaws of the

WEIGHING ANCHOR: FIRST PORTS OF CALL

gaff were twisted and were chafing against the mast. The gaff coming against the aftermost shroud was the cause. At 7 a.m. I got the mainsail down to inspect the jaws more closely. At 8.15 a.m. we hoisted the sail again, having been unable to mend matters. Meanwhile, the wind had begun to blow harder.

Kurun was making considerable progress. At 10.10 a.m. we crossed the Ushant-Finisterre route, the iron road as it is called on account of the number of steamships that follow it, making it one of the busiest routes in the world. There were plenty of ships in sight.

At 11 a.m. we passed within a cable of *Etel*, a tunny-fisher, going south and carrying little sail. We exchanged warm greetings with the sincerity of true sailors, though our words were lost in the wind. She was the last ship from home we saw.

Towards midday, the wind dropped again to almost nothing. At 1.45 p.m. I lowered the mainsail, as did the tunny-fisher also, for with a heavy swell the rigging is likely to be chafed to pieces. It occurred to me that if I turned the jaws of the gaff round, they might function better, but when at 3 p.m. I set the mainsail again, the jaws twisted even worse, and within ten minutes I had to take the sail down. Which meant that there we were, out at sea, without a mainsail—a stupid situation, and all because of a defective piece of ironwork which I should most certainly have replaced before setting out had I had money enough.

Dufour, always critical, swore lustily. I told him there was no danger and set to work trying various combinations of sail, but no matter what I did, the boat continued to drag. At night, I set the mizzen stormsail. That, with the staysail, kept the boat perfectly on her course, but with this dying south-south-west wind, the log did not even turn.

September 30th. With the dawn, the wind shifted to the east, then north-east, and then steadied. Going by the log, we were only doing three and a quarter knots, but I increased speed by setting the balloon jib. That afternoon, the amount of wind was insignificant and I made use of the respite to straighten out the twisted jaws, more or less adequately, by hammering them with the maul and bending them. I considered making for the Spanish coast to have the jaws properly mended. Coruña? Ferrol? I studied the nautical handbooks and made calculations. It would be a nuisance

TROUBLE WITH THE GAFF

having to remain inside Cape Finisterre. So at 7.05 p.m., I contrived to set the mainsail once more and continued on my original course. The wind had sprung up again, from the north-east, and the weather was fine.

October 1st. The gaff had chafed the throat halyards. At 0.10 a.m., I had to take in the mainsail to reeve a new halyard. With the swell, the operation was no simple one, and I had to do some acrobatics in the rigging. At 1.40 a.m., I was able to set the mainsail again.

During the twenty-four hours of this day, *Kurun* covered ninety miles by the log in a heavy swell, first from the north-west, then from due north.

I decided to call at Vigo: at least I should have cleared Finisterre—one worry less. I had no detailed chart, but I knew the entrance to Vigo was simple enough to negotiate.

October 2nd. *Kurun* made good progress before a fresh north-east wind. At 2 a.m., I had to take in three rolls, as the wind continued to freshen. We were making for the coast devilishly fast and, visibility being excellent, I expected to see the lights at any moment. At 3.30 a.m., Dufour, whose turn it was at the helm, sighted a lighthouse to port; at 4 a.m., I identified Villano, at 4.10 Toriñana, the most westerly Spanish cape. All we had to do then was to bear away along the coast until we reached Vigo.

I was now keeping within a couple of miles of the shore, and by daylight I recognized Mount Alto, superbly dominating the wild and rocky coastline. The wind brought us the scent of moor and heather, and it was oddly pleasant to smell land again after a couple of days at sea. A multitude of birds had settled on the water or were flying overhead—a sign that there were fish about. The weather was fine and I was happy. I was rash enough to rouse Dufour to enable him to enjoy the spectacle of the waking world. It was a mistake. I was given a poor reception; he had apparently seen enough sunrises in Indo-China to last him a lifetime.

At 8 a.m., we were abreast of Cape Finisterre, the *Celticum promontorium*, the *finis terrae* that so engrossed the imagination of the ancients. Unfortunately, visibility was again poor and I was unable to enjoy a view of Corcubion Bay. Before long, we lost sight of the misty coast, near though it was. I was following a safe course to allow us to pass well clear of the Bajo de los Meixidos shelf. We

WEIGHING ANCHOR: FIRST PORTS OF CALL

were running very fast and by midday we rounded Cape Corrubedo, passing just a little too near to the dangerous rocks that beset the coast at this point. We passed the islands of Salvora, Ons and Onza on the port side, to weather the Cies Islands.

We had a fine coastal trip, several magnificent sailing vessels were in sight, and at last Cape del Home, to the north of Vigo Bay, came into our view. I lowered the gaff to reeve a halyard for my ensign and at 5.30 p.m. I rounded the Cape del Home close to. The wind had eased; with colours flying, we entered the beautiful Vigo Bay.

The chart I had gave not a single detail about the harbour we were making for, which meant that I had to be on the look out. After hesitating whether or not to enter the fishing harbour, we decided to proceed eastward: a fortunate inspiration—before long we spied the masts of some fine yachts. But I was still unable to perceive any passage.

Carefully, ready for anything, we approached after taking in the staysail. Suddenly I spotted what seemed to be the entrance to the yacht harbour and boldly made for it, not quite knowing what to expect. Dufour, by mistake, let go the main halyards when I asked him to take in the jib. After I had bawled him out, we took in all sail and with just enough way on came to rest at the exact spot where we were to anchor. We could scarcely have done better had we studied a chart.

We were pleased to have reached Vigo. The further south we were, the better the weather would be. Our call had only one purpose: to get the jaws of the gaff mended so that we could continue on our way safely. All the time we were in port, I looked after the boat, leaving Dufour to do what he liked.

Hardly were we moored before a waiter brought us a message: El Presidente Luis Pinero Bonet bid us welcome and put all the club's facilities at our disposal. I filled up a small card that was given me and thus were all formalities dealt with: I was to have no difficulties at all with police, customs, or other officials. This seemed to me a most gentlemanly way of welcoming the stranger, one I could well appreciate, and I wished that certain more modern, richer and more complacent countries might follow the example instead of besieging the newcomer with a crowd of officials armed with regulations as annoying as they are futile.

VIGO

Very few yachts at the club; among them the small Swedish auxiliary cutter *Polaris* on her way to circumnavigate the world. She was a very fine little cutter of the Norwegian type. The lines of her hull, which was clinker-built and varnished, were of the purest, a joy to the eye. I noticed, with growing perplexity, her cluttered deck, without bulwark, without lifelines, no watertight cockpit, her fragile Marconi rig. *Kurun*, which was slight enough, seemed to crush this boat by her comparative weight. So far we had not gone beyond coastal navigation, and were not regarded as being in the same class.

I found it impossible to have the new gaff made as I wanted, as the right kind of wood was not procurable; the gaff made for me by a carpenter, though of mediocre workmanship and none too solid, was acceptable. He asked 300 pesetas, which was expensive; we settled on 250.

Dufour was attracted by the notion of calling in at Lisbon, and gradually won me round to the idea. *Balder* lent me an excellent chart of the Tagus entrance, from which I made a transfer copy.

October 11th. *Kurun* was ready to set forth once more, now that her rigging was repaired and we were provided with fresh water and fresh victuals. I did not care for the look of the sky and the British weather forecast was unfavourable. I hesitated, then decided to go, though I knew that between Vigo and Lisbon there is no suitable shelter from bad weather. The short trip turned out to be hard going.

At 11.45 a.m. we started, sculling with an oar over the stern as we were towed out by the club's rowing boat. As soon as we had left the yacht harbour, we hoisted the sails and slowly made our way out of the bay to encounter a fresh head wind from the southwest. But the breeze dropped and we did not pass the rocks of San Martin Island, over which the waves were breaking, until 7 p.m.

We passed the spot where, in December, 1945, the French 60 ft. yacht *Marie Geneviève* was lost with all hands, as was a Norwegian yacht last year. When the breeze dropped altogether, we drifted northward, approaching the islands of San Martin and Cies on which we could see the breakers crashing. The islands looked wonderful in the moonlight. I frequently checked our position and the

WEIGHING ANCHOR: FIRST PORTS OF CALL

effects of the current. At midnight, a welcome little breeze blew from the north-north-east, allowing us to get away.

The 12th was a day of alternating calm and light breeze. By lunch-time, we were becalmed, and remained so throughout the night of the 13th until at last, at 6.40 a.m., a favourable breeze allowed us to set our sails again. To prevent things from becoming too easy, however, the breeze veered south-east, then south, growing stronger every minute.

The sky was lowering and, fearing a sudden gale, I drove the boat as hard as I could, with the mainsail reefed down a couple of rolls, towards the open sea. In the afternoon, about 4 o'clock, as no change had occurred, I changed course and lengthened the landward tacks after shaking out the rolls in the mainsail.

The appearance of the sky along this coast can be disconcerting when one is used to French skies. My neighbour of *Balder* at Vigo had had the same impression. Some of the skies are enough to give one nightmares.

Close hauled on the starboard tack, the cutter made for the coast all night in a weak and fitful breeze.

We spent the next afternoon becalmed off the channel of Barra Nova in splendid weather. That night, as we watched the fishing boats entering the lagoon of Aveiro, one of them, pitying our plight, came out to us. We did not know a word of Portuguese, and the fishermen knew no language but their own, but we succeeded in making ourselves perfectly understood. They were pleasant young fellows. They saw that we were French, and realized that our engineless cutter was likely to be where she was for some time. They insisted on presenting us with sardines; their deck was piled high with them. The swell made it risky for their boat to come alongside ours, and they rowed over to us in a boat bringing us a boxful of their catch, enough to feed the crew of a four-masted barque! We didn't know what to do with them all. I prepared them in every possible way and pickled a lot of them. We were still living on them when we arrived in Lisbon, and in the end had to throw what was left overboard. We had had our fill of sardines for some time to come.

The morning of October 15th was marvellous, hot and without a breath of wind. It was holiday weather. Dufour, washing down the deck, lost the bucket overboard, and so limpid was the water

HOLIDAY WEATHER

that I was able to watch that bucket sinking for at least twenty fathoms. Poor bucket! I had had it in all my boats and one is apt to become attached to these old familiar objects.

My companion then went for a swim round the cutter. He had hardly climbed back on deck before we saw the fin of a shark—the first we had seen so far. After that incident, Dufour was markedly less eager to go swimming.

Not before 4.30 a.m., on the 16th, was I able to set sail again, and then only under the auspices of the lightest of breezes. But before dawn, we were caught in a thick fog, hardly able to see a thing. Wind variable, mostly head winds.

In spite of all difficulties, we succeeded in rounding Cape Mondego in the early afternoon. That moth-eaten cape at the extremity of the Serra de Buarcos was to mark the end of the wretched conditions we had been having since Vigo. Now squalls were alternating with calm and in one of them the wind shifted abruptly to the north-west and freshened. As we approached Berlings Island, the wind veered to the north—which it is supposed invariably to do there—well, it certainly did this time.

Kurun began to make better progress and on the 17th, at 1.45 a.m., we crossed the line Berlings—Cape Carvoeiro. The swell was so great that its troughs engulfed large vessels to the tops of their masts. Though the night was beautiful, the crew of *Kurun* were not feeling particularly good. We had been following a deplorable zigzag course, half asleep at the tiller, in spite of the violent swell. The intense heat of the sun of the day before had been like a blow on the head, and we had been partaking too freely of sardines.

At 11.30 p.m., we managed to pass Cape da Roca, and, further to the west, Cape Europe. An hour later, after having rounded Cape Razo with its ragged, wild coastline, we entered the northern channel, along the villa-lined sandy beach of Cascaes.

We had to make up against the ebb, but we soon arrived at the Cachopo de Norte, a vast sand-bank, which we left to the south of us. The sea was tracing arabesques in the muddy water of the river. At one moment, the wind seemed to be dropping, but this was merely because we were close inshore. At 2.30, I passed by the foot of Forte São Julião and entered the river.

I had observed a handsome black ketch bound out to sea between the two Cachopos. She was *Omoo*, a Belgian yacht on her

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way to Nice. I did not suspect that I was to meet her crew in the Galapagos on board a French yacht.

We sailed up the Tagus—the Rio Tejo—against the current; first Belem became visible, dominated by the imposing Ajuda palace with its square outline, then the Alcantara and the vast conglomeration of Lisbon dominating the Mar de Palha, the Sea of Straw. Before reaching Belem, I went close inshore to get less tide. One has to use all one's wiles to make any progress when the wind is light, leeward of the land. We passed close in to the famous tower of Belem. White, crenellated, turreted, it stands on the beach looking like a pastry-cook's dream.

I was planning to enter directly into the yacht harbour, but our slow progress gave a gesticulating official time to come alongside and wave us towards the quarantine roads. There was so little wind that we hardly had steerage way and I had to perform some risky evolutions among ships of all kinds and sizes. I could not find the quarantine station and decided that, officials or no officials, I wasn't going to endanger my boat any longer. As it was, I ran *Kurun* aground at the entrance to the yacht harbour by going too close inshore, so had to wait for the tide. Not before 10.15 p.m., after many a manoeuvre, did we succeed in reaching the only available place left in the yacht harbour, where we made all fast by a variety of ropes to the quay and to other craft. To do this we had to use the pram. That night we slept like logs.

In contrast with Vigo, the yacht harbour at Belem was full of fine craft, among which *Kurun* seemed lost. I had the pleasure of admiring several graceful hulls and of seeing the ex-pilot cutter from Le Havre, *Jolie-Brise*, now flying the Portuguese flag, still cutting a fine figure though getting on in years, a craft famous in the great ocean races.

The Belem yacht harbour is a favourite resort for the last representatives of the art of sailing. The beach on which the famous tower rises has seen men such as Diaz, Cabral and Albuquerque setting out on their incredible voyages. And the tower itself is there to mark the spot from which Vasco da Gama sailed for the Indies.

The calm spells and light breezes we had encountered between Vigo and the Tagus had left the rigging looking somewhat tired. The jaws of the gaff had not proved entirely satisfactory; the iron

LAST CALL IN EUROPE

had damaged the mast by rubbing against it, and I had to fix a sheet of brass round the mast to protect it. When this had been attended to and we were ready to go, we were delayed by the weather. I waited for a severe depression to blow over; the winds, with velocity 10 (Beaufort Scale) at Oporto, must have caused a fine dance in the Bay of Biscay.

October 26th. Weather very fine, the glass high, moderate to fresh north wind: the best possible conditions for setting out. Unfortunately, formalities held us up another day. The police were on their toes: Franco was arriving at Lisbon on board a man-of-war. The administration was both suspicious and apprehensive; they insisted on my stating the exact hour of my departure, as if *Kurun* were a train or a motor coach! Dufour took umbrage at their attitude and hastened round to the French Consul to get our papers cleared.

On the evening of the 27th, a myrmidon of the law made a special journey from Lisbon to deal with us, but by that time it was too late in the day. We had decided on leaving early the next morning. And that meant—sleep. The next day we should be leaving Europe.

October 28th. A splendid morning, with a fine offshore breeze. Her sails filling nicely, *Kurun* sailed down the Tagus, a majestic waterway, under a cloudless sky. We were making good progress, yet a French cargo boat, the *Pierre de Saurel*, overtook us. We ran up our colours at the peak and dipped them to her.

A fine breeze. I made some optimistic calculations about the time needed to reach St. Vincent—about 110 miles—less than a day's run. The sea was green and flecked with foam.

Unfortunately, after we had rounded Cape Espichel, the breeze gradually eased off, veered to the north and then dropped altogether. Thousands of birds had settled on the water and porpoises were chasing shoals of fish. Up in the bow, my Mauser gun in my hand and a harpoon leaning against the rail beside me, I waited in vain for them to come within reach.

Late that afternoon, a small breeze from the north-west, soon veering to the north, roused us from our lethargy. We sailed down the coast of Portugal, keeping outside the steamship route—the weather was superb. During the night, porpoises came and played under the bow. I did not close an eye that night, unable to bring

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myself to put down my harpoon, but its shaft proved to be too short and too light. I hit three or four without making a kill.

On the 29th, at 1 p.m., we passed within half a mile of Cape St. Vincent, the south-western extremity of the Iberian peninsula. The monastery on the summit of the cape dominates a wild solitude—fortunate monks, isolated on that rock, contemplating the immensity of the sea.

We crossed the paths of a number of ships; our cutter, driven on by the north wind, was drawing further away from land. By the light of the setting sun, we could still see the blunt tops of the Serra Monchique, the last sight of Europe.

It was warm, the sea was beautiful.

St. Vincent—Fedala: 212 miles. A short crossing but one that was to take much longer than I had anticipated. On the 30th, at 4 o'clock, the wind dropped again, except for occasional playful insignificant gusts. We dragged ourselves along, taking a day to cover twenty-three miles. Nothing occurred to disturb life on board except that, one morning, the large dorsal fin of a shark appeared straight ahead. I leaped for my gun, but before I was ready to fire, the monster was well out of range.

November 1st. At 1.30 p.m., the breeze began to blow from the east; I set the balloon jib and an hour later we sighted land: the African mainland. The breeze having freshened and veered to the north, we were making a fine curling bow wave. To keep the balloon jib set was almost superfluous, but it was very intoxicating to be making so much headway. At the helm, I was as happy as a sandboy.

The coastline was growing less blurred, but even when I climbed into the rigging, I could perceive no salient point. And the great reservoirs of Fedala are supposed to be a first-rate landmark.

At 5 p.m., Dufour was certain he could see the reservoirs on the port side. Was I then looking out toward Casablanca? To be precise, we could distinguish nothing.

A few hours later, we were lying becalmed near a misty coast; at moments not a thing could be seen. I was somewhat perplexed about our exact position. To judge by the sound, we were near breakers. I hove the lead: sixteen fathoms, rock. I stayed on deck all night to keep a watch. I was very damp and chilly. Dufour

AFRICA IN SIGHT

slept. I rigged a line but unfortunately had no bait. I fixed some bread and cheese on the hook, but the fish spurned it.

November 2nd. Midnight. I thought I could identify Renard Island about fifteen miles from Fedala, and at 3.30 a.m., the mist having cleared, I could identify Fedala lighthouse S. 52 W.

A light breeze sprang up with the dawn—just enough for a model sailing yacht. We dragged our way along. All along this inhospitable shore, breakers were crashing. I noticed that a cargo boat had run aground on the foreshore. Old-time sailors would have laughed at seeing a ship equipped with modern instruments run aground in fine weather.

It was peaceful on board, the wavelets rippling along the side. A fine morning. Finally at 2.30 p.m., *Kurun*, with just enough way on to make it, entered the narrows of Fedala. I tied up at the far end of the quay, some 150 feet astern of the large, fine schooner-yacht *Carola*.

Hardly had we arrived before a small motor-launch came to extend us a warm welcome: Dr. Greslé, a Breton from Redon, who had settled at Fedala. He brought us some fresh fruit, lent us some Moroccan money and went to telegraph our arrival.

Dufour went off to play golf, a game which he adores and at which he excels. The 'captain', after two sleepless nights, slept and slept.

CHAPTER IV

FROM MOROCCO TO THE CANARY ISLANDS

THE arrival of *Kurun* in Morocco brought the first part of our cruise to an end—a difficult stage of our voyage in that it comprised crossing the Bay of Biscay in autumn and sailing along the Iberian coast, inhospitable and dangerous in bad weather.

The next crossings presented no problem. The route from Morocco to the Western Pacific, leaving out of account the periods of calm in the Gulf of Panama, could be depended on to provide ideal sailing conditions. I rejoiced, therefore, at having reached North Africa after crossings which had been good in spite of the time they had taken and the erratic weather conditions we had encountered.

Fedala is a small harbour situated some twelve miles from Casablanca. I chose it in order to be free of the bustle and turbulence of the big harbour. Apart from calls by tankers, the activities of Fedala are mostly limited to those of the fishing fleet. There are, however, a yacht club and a few one-design sailing boats.

My first impression on arriving at Fedala was that it was sheltered and safe. I was mistaken. I had been warned about the undertow, but I had been sceptical. I was soon to change my attitude.

The township of Fedala is pleasant, set amid palm trees, flowers and bougainvilleas. It has the placidity of a French village, combined with exotic brilliance. I reckoned on staying there no longer than a few weeks. But this, as matters turned out, was not to be. Circumstances on board *Kurun* were to be changed fundamentally.

When I had taken Dufour on at Le Croisic, I had come to no definite decision on the length of our companionship. He had a brother in Morocco, so that Morocco was his main objective. Dufour and I were very different in character, which didn't matter much. What did matter was that he was embittered—with good

DUFOUR AND I PART

reason, considering all that he had endured—and he never ceased carping. God knows, there was enough about me that called for criticism: my standard of dress, my way of life, my ideas, down to the absence of an auxiliary engine in my boat or of the little varnished flagstaff that is so usual on board yachts. Dufour was like a pistol permanently cocked.

Being peaceful by nature, I decided to carry on without him. Unfortunately, I became involved in a dispute with him a few weeks after I had come to this decision, and, though usually unaggressive, I allowed my temper to get the better of me. And there we were, going for each other on Fedala quay. I injured my thumb punching him, and together we rolled in the dust. A fine to-do: the 'captain', his face covered with scratches, his shins open from kicks, and the 'hand' with his face swollen from contact with my fists. A titillating spectacle for the gossip-loving Arabs and a disgrace in the eyes of everybody else.

In the end, Dufour and I parted amicably enough, having made up our differences without rancour. But how pleased I was to be alone on board again, in undisturbed peace.

I made some excellent friends in Morocco and was induced to see something of the country, going as far as the Atlas mountains. I was introduced to some Arab families and found it easy to appreciate the dignity of their gestures and their fine characters.

I spent my time studying the route ahead and making some improvements on board. Bertin, one of the rare shipwrights in North Africa, was a true friend to me, and made me a spare gaff, to which I affixed the remodelled jaws. My father had presented me with the means to have a small windlass made from old gear-wheels. From England he had a telltale compass sent me to hang above my head in my bunk; these were two essential improvements for sailing single-handed. I lengthened the awning over the deck, a necessary precaution when lying at anchor in hot climates.

My inventory was swollen by an American rat-trap. *Carola* presented me with it after an undaunted specimen had made its way aboard along one of the mooring ropes and played havoc among my stores. I was reminded of my friend Jean-Michel, who had laughed at the meticulous way I made my preparations. 'You think you have thought of everything,' he had said, 'but you'll find you've left out something.' He was right.

FROM MOROCCO TO THE CANARY ISLANDS

While I was in the yacht harbour at Belem, I had noticed that *Kurun*'s bottom was foul, so now I sculled her to a small sandy beach near the Fish Market. When there is no undertow, this sandy beach is the best possible place for a job such as this. The famous *Anahita* of Captain Bernicot had used it. I spent two days, availing myself of the tides, laboriously scrubbing and scraping, for the vegetation below the waterline proved to be abundant. Working alone, as I liked best, I also gave the bottom a coat of paint.

My plan was to go on alone, but my parents were opposed to the idea and had already put an advertisement in *Le Yacht* for a shipmate. In this way, my new companion-to-be, Paul Farge of Pontoise, a photographer of twenty-five, former seminarist and law student, got in touch with me by letter. After some hesitation, I wrote to him in reply, telling him that I accepted his offer in principle but begging him to weigh the pros and cons carefully. To go on a long cruise, just the two of you, demands considerable mutual understanding and forbearance as well as love of seamanship and oneness of purpose. I did not demur at the fact that his physique was not particularly robust, nor at the fact that he had sailed only on the Lake of Geneva. I regarded the human qualities as more important.

During those first days of 1950, the undertow caused me serious difficulties. The great North Atlantic storms were raising a heavy swell that came crashing down on the Moroccan coast. When that swell is at its worst, it enters poorly sheltered harbours such as Casablanca and Fedala and causes violent movements in the water that reach speeds of several knots. Moorings and roadsteads then became untenable; it is often impossible to keep craft in position and this sometimes leads to catastrophe.

From the moment of my arrival, I had been warned about all this, but I had thought my informants were exaggerating. I can now say that during the whole of my voyage *Kurun* was never in so much danger as then.

There were preludes: mooring ropes parted, leading to collisions with neighbouring craft. I spent many a sleepless night but luckily the cutter suffered little damage. Events of the night of February 6th to 7th, however, were the most serious. The under-

CHAOS IN FEDALA HARBOUR

tow made itself felt with sudden fury and I had no time even to think of rest. The cutter, firmly secured to a buoy aft and to a stern chain of *Carola* forward, was sheering about as if under canvas, now to one side, now to the other, and then the big schooner began to tug hard on her two anchors. Hastily I secured my boom and got my pram on deck.

The stern chains of *Carola*, dangerously taut above the water, parted one after the other, but I was able to disentangle my mooring ropes forward. Then we swung round in a wild saraband. Several times I thought my small cutter was going to be caught under the counter of *Carola*—a nasty prospect. I was nearly crushed to death myself. *Kurun*'s mast shattered the flagstaff of the schooner and her big swinging chains caught my boom. In the nick of time, I managed to avert serious damage: the jackstays were saved by a miracle. I succeeded in slipping the ropes that held us by the stern. Availing myself of a moment's respite, I dropped an anchor, but it dragged. The bottom of the harbour was alternately emptying and filling with terrifying rapidity. Were *Kurun* to drag far, she would be stove in.

Some Arabs were shouting in a boat near me. I threw them a long line and with considerable difficulty they got it on to the quay. I began to haul on it, in the belief that they had saved the situation for me, when the pin of the shackle at the end of the warp came out because they had failed to screw it in far enough. I quickly hove my pram over the side and with a great deal of trouble succeeded in making my warp fast properly and hauling clear.

At 11 p.m., *Carola* had sounded her siren for assistance, but no one had lifted a finger. The big schooner was sweeping the harbour, touching at times, and occasionally colliding with fishing boats—a massacre.

By the time daylight came, I had managed to bring up *Kurun* on one anchor that seemed to be holding and had made her fast to the quay with a warp of some 350 feet to ensure elasticity; the end of the warp was bent to a steel wire sling to prevent it chafing under the abnormal tension. Not before the afternoon did the pilots succeed in getting hold of the schooner, which up to that moment had remained a menace to everybody: she had already torn away the rails of the slipway and sunk two fishing boats.

On the morning of February 16th, the pilot boat took me to the

FROM MOROCCO TO THE CANARY ISLANDS

roads of Casablanca, where I went on board the cargo boat *Algérien*. There I made the acquaintance of my future companion, Farge, who was experiencing sea life for the first time. My first impression of him was frankly unfavourable, though I was unable to analyse the reason; but it was an impression that lasted only a few seconds. He was a friendly, smiling young man, tall and thin, with a quick-moving head and large protruding ears; from time to time, he seemed to be seized with a nervous trembling. I had imagined him very different.

We took back to Fedala all his weighty luggage; a keen photographer, he had brought with him enough equipment to sink the pram. Among his effects was a present to me from my father—a radio which would in future enable me to pick up time signals at sea.

Once my companion was settled on board, we took in victuals sufficient for several months and two ten-gallon casks as an addition to our store of water. We were well on the way to being ready for our trip to the Canaries.

I soon began to appreciate the good qualities of Farge: he knew how to improvise, he was alert, active and generally handy, a useful type of man to have on board. Although I had been accustomed to doing my own cooking for years, I relinquished the galley to him without regret. He was, moreover, a talented photographer and was hoping to use his photographs for publication in a number of magazines. He told me of several contracts he had in mind that were to add to our coffers in no meagre manner. While we awaited that great day, I handed over all financial responsibility to him, for he was prepared to act as treasurer.

Our initial relations, therefore, were good; but his frail constitution caused me a certain misgiving. We were very different in our tastes, our ideals and our aim in life. He was an inveterate talker; I liked silence. He talked incessantly and about everything. I preferred reticence.

He was indeed very young for his age and he had apparently always lived with his father and mother. It was mainly to break away from them that he had been so eager to join up with me. His wish to liberate himself deserved every encouragement in my opinion.

I had planned to set out on March 19th. Alas! A violent

ANOTHER NIGHT OF ALARMS

undertow again brought the utmost confusion to the harbour during the night of the 17th to 18th. I was wakened by hearing my side grinding against *Carola* although I had taken every precaution to keep that schooner at a distance, for she was becoming a nightmare to me. My anchor had dragged in poor ground. I had considerable trouble in avoiding being damaged by *Carola's* great steel hull, against which we were being mercilessly hurled by the undertow. Farge broke the boat-hook; I was caught between *Carola* and the end of the boom of *Kurun*, the stern of which was pressed vertically against the schooner; my chest was nearly crushed. Feverishly, I told Farge to take the pram and get a warp over to the quay, and by dint of using the windlass I succeeded in getting away from the sinister schooner. The 200-ft. length of strong, brand-new rope was completely out of the water, threatening to snap like a thread. A few moments later, the rope began slipping, and I went overboard. I was lucky enough to get hold of the rail so that only my legs got wet. Like an arrow from the bow, *Kurun*, stern first, shot towards the schooner. By sheer chance, I succeeded in catching a turn round the bitts and we brought up within a foot or two of that wall-like schooner.

All this proved to be merely a prelude. With the dawn, the two chains at the stern of *Carola* tautened, as did the wires to the buoy; they rose out of the water over a distance of a hundred feet, and then parted. The massacre had started again.

Carola swept the inner part of the harbour with a speed that was at times terrifying, colliding with nearly everything, threatening to crush all smaller craft on her mad career. I immediately got out another warp to the quay, casing off my anchor chain. I had had to slip the hawser made fast to the buoy because *Carola* had dragged it away.

I had moved away as far as I could, but I was by no means out of all the possible trajectories that the frenzied schooner might follow, and I was trapped where I was, quite unable to leave. We spent all day on deck.

In their gallivantings, the chains of *Carola* had fouled my anchor and I was forced to slip the whole of my chain. It proved impossible to immobilize *Carola* again until the afternoon. That night, the small harbour motor-launch towed us, together with a small wine-boat, *Ana*, to a place of safety. It had been a close shave.

FROM MOROCCO TO THE CANARY ISLANDS

The loss of my anchor grieved me, though I felt the loss of my calibrated anchor-chain even more, for it had fitted the windlass and could not be replaced in Morocco. I spent several days in attempting to recover my lost equipment. I dragged the bottom with a creeper. Men tried diving in an effort to locate it, and a diver complete with diving suit was sent down, all to no avail. I had to resign myself to the loss which I felt most bitterly at the next ports of call. It was a sad expense on top of it all. The owner of *Carola*, which, after all, had been responsible for all the damage, did not even deign to answer the successive appeals I sent to him.

After several days of strong winds from the south-west with squalls, that is to say, winds diametrically opposed to my intended route, I decided to set out on April 3rd for the relatively short trip of 540 miles from Fedala to the Canaries.

April 3rd. Fine weather. At 1 p.m., the pilot boat came to take us in tow. As soon as we were out of the narrows, we set our sails; it was a pleasure to watch the enthusiasm with which our friends who had come to see us off hauled on the halyards.

Light wind from the north-west. Gentle swell from the north. Close in, on the port tack.

At 1.30 p.m. we drank a glass of champagne and our friends departed in the pilot boat. The excitement of leave-taking caused us to forget to hand them our mail.

Rapidly the pilot boat disappeared between the piers of Fedala. *Kurun* was once more alone on the ocean. After this prolonged sojourn in harbour, I was glad to be at sea again, especially in such fine weather. My companion was feeling slightly apprehensive at finding himself marooned on this immensity in so small a vessel.

At 2.15 p.m., having ascertained that we were well clear of Cape Fedala, I went about and followed the course I had marked on the chart. The breeze freshened slightly and the log was soon indicating four and a half knots. Late that afternoon, we passed Casablanca.

It was exceptionally fine, though this did not prevent my companion from paying the customary tribute to Neptune. 'That's nothing,' I told him, when he had finished turning himself inside out, 'you'll soon get used to it.'

The wind veered to the north. Though light, it still pushed us along at a fair speed.

THE MOROCCAN COAST

Farge, recovered from his indisposition, came to relieve me at the helm during the night, but I shut only one eye, being a little dubious in spite of the detailed instructions I had given him, in particular to keep a little further offshore and to remain on the look out for steamers.

On April 4th, at 6 a.m., we passed Mazagan; the Sidi Ben Afi lighthouse, which I had identified towards the end of the night, was now abeam. From Mazagan to Las Palmas was a straight line by the chart.

April 6th. After playing between south-south-east and south-east, the wind veered to the south during the morning. I decided to go and have a look at what was happening off Mogador, hoping to find a fisherman to take the mail we had forgotten to send at Fedala.

The weather was continuing splendid. The sea was blue, and the coast, under the brilliant sun, made a fine contrast with its warm colours. We could see the foothills of Jebel el-Hadid, which run parallel with the coast at a height of two thousand feet. This Moroccan coastline, wild and studded with tombs and marabouts, is remarkably impressive when seen from the open sea. Drawing in closer, I could see the marabout of Sidi Yacoub, a good landmark.

Before long, I sighted what I was looking for: a ship. I could see she was a trawler, and I made a small parcel of our correspondence and sailed around until I almost touched the vessel with its motley crew. I threw the parcel on their deck. Not one of the men spoke French, but, praise be to Allah, we understood each other well enough. Our letters, at any rate, arrived at their destinations without delay.

From the sea, Mogador presented a most alluring picture. Across the blue of the sea, against the blue of the sky flecked only by an occasional fair-weather cumulus, the town appeared even whiter in the sunshine, its houses, towers and minarets encompassed by the girdle of its Portuguese fortifications.

On the 7th, at 6.30 a.m., a light, fitful breeze had taken us no further than within thirty miles S. 8° W. of Mogador, and Aeolus was not to indulge us much more for some time. Early in the forenoon, I took two rolls in the mainsail, for the breeze was freshening from the south-west. After lunch, we had to take in two more rolls,

FROM MOROCCO TO THE CANARY ISLANDS

for we were carrying too much sail and the sea was rising. The African mainland finally vanished in the east.

April 8th. Gentle breezes and calm. The crew availed themselves of the occasion to have an honest night's sleep, under bare poles, the light hoisted on the peak halyards.

The next morning, at 10.45, I was able to make sail again, in a fine south-west breeze; the sky was clear and cloudless all day, but the breeze, freshening, forced us to take two rolls in the mainsail at 2.30 p.m., and two more at 2.45 p.m., an untimely interruption of the lunch we had just started. It being Easter, the cook had varied the menu by preparing frankfurters and buttered noodles—a festive meal, washed down with a bottle of good wine.

At 5.30 p.m., I hove-to, although the weather was still tolerable, for we were shipping too much water for the poor progress *Kurun* was making. We were to have a peaceful Easter, after all.

At night, suddenly, the wind dropped altogether—fun and games for Easter. We took in all sail and *Kurun* rolled her rail under, but it was a fine night, which we enjoyed under the protection of our light.

April 10th. The finest day imaginable, but not a breath of wind, not a ripple on the water. The long swell seemed like the breathing of the ocean, and *Kurun* rose and fell gently to its rhythm.

With daybreak, three rorquals—finback whales—came nosing round the boat. I watched their gambols, my Mauser in hand, fancying a little whale-steak for lunch. But though twice the length of our boat, they kept a respectful distance.

Becalmed again. We had a good rest and availed ourselves of the occasion to shave and tidy up generally. The bread we had had re-baked at Fedala had been taken on board a little too soon and had gone mouldy. Regretfully, we threw it overboard.

The sunset was beautiful, but a little thundery. Was the weather about to break? We went to sleep.

April 11th. 3 a.m. All hands on deck. The sky was overcast, the night pitch-black. Lightning from north to south, crossing through the east. Moderate south-east breeze.

At 3.40 a.m., we proceeded on our way with the mainsail still reefed as it was last Sunday; I also set No. 3 jib. The glass was falling and I preferred to wait and see before setting more sail.

At dawn, we passed within a cable of some trawlers fishing on

APPROACHING THE CANARIES

the Conception Bank, which at its shallowest is ninety fathoms, and exchanged friendly greetings.

Before long, we were surrounded by violent squalls: visibility nil, thunder. Lightning struck close to us, an unpleasant experience. The wretched wind shifted again to south-west, then backed to the east, then veered north-west. Were we going to strike land?

I said to Farge, 'The first to see land is entitled to a tot of rum, the second gets half a tot, and the last a kick up his backside.'

'And what happens to the one before last?' he asked in reply to my quip. We were beginning to talk like old salts.

At 2.35 p.m. the clouds tore asunder and I saw Alleganza exactly where I had expected to see it. Gratified, I shouted, 'Splice the mainbrace!'

A shortlived satisfaction. A quarter of an hour later, we were becalmed. On the horizon, we could see Alleganza, the most northern of the Canaries, and one of the smallest, an uninhabited, extinct volcano.

Calm. Calm and patience, take it as it comes—the sailor's lot. At any rate, he is on the ocean where he wants to be.

I lit the light and hoisted it on the peak halyards. The crew turned in.

April 12th. At 4.15 a.m. I made sail again with a gentle easterly breeze that was playful enough to lead us a dance. But what did it matter? The weather was fine and we were slowly, slowly approaching land. The islands Alleganza, Montana Clara, Graciosa and Lanzarote were displaying their volcanic profiles in ochre and purple against a sky of brilliant azure. The birds, gorged with sardines, rose heavily as we disturbed them. That was a sign that that there were probably other fish in the offing. The water was wonderfully limpid, and suddenly I observed that we were passing right over a school of tunny-fish. Their black spindle-like bodies with fins like bill-hooks seemed motionless; occasionally they oscillated and their light-coloured bellies would spangle the velvety twilight of this gigantic crystal-clear aquarium.

At once I put out the fishing line that is invariably kept in readiness coiled at the stern. Hardly had it gone down before a thirty-pounder had swallowed the bait and was swung over the rail by a vigorous and sharp pull. These fish are mad on bait—a spinner with a piece of red and white material fixed in the way we

FROM MOROCCO TO THE CANARY ISLANDS

were told by some Portuguese fishermen with whom we talked in Morocco. Two fathoms of brass wire over the rail are enough to hook these fine fish. It was a remarkable sport; the tunny-fish bite greedily. Unfortunately, my line was not strong enough, and the larger fish, in twisting, broke off one hook of the spinner after the other. I asked Farge to gaff them for me so that I should not have to drag them out of the water on the line. The poor lad started to wallop them instead of hooking them in, and after that my line was useless. I lost one fish after another. We could have gone right on across the bank, there were so many. As it was, the one we caught was more than enough. The deck was covered with blood and looked like a battlefield. I gutted the tunny so that it would keep better, while *Kurun*, steadied by her balloon jib, sailed along, steering herself.

By lunch-time, we were becalmed at the entrance to the channel separating Allegranza and Montana Clara. Our main meal, it goes almost without saying, consisted of tunny-fish with a draught of white wine. On this occasion, the captain, a specialist in cooking fish, had ousted the regular cook. The crew was a little greedy and ever after that day the word tunny, even when whispered, tended to make my companion a little queasy.

The following day we were becalmed to the west of Allegranza, which gave us an opportunity of admiring it from another angle. Late in the afternoon a light air came from the north. Towards 10 p.m., the breeze veered to the north-east and gradually freshened throughout the night. Was this the trade wind? Had we at long last caught it?

Our stem was making the foam fly and, from the cabin, we could hear the mighty rush of water along the sides. The sea, a deep emerald green, grew wilder and frothier. 'Good little *Kurun*! Go ahead, you're having a fine time!' The joy of sailing like this!

But by midday, I had to shorten sail and take four rolls in the mainsail.

Since 11 o'clock, La Isleta, the promontory sheltering the harbour of La Luz from the north, had been in sight. I took over the helm from Farge in order to steer straight towards it, the wind dead astern. Early that afternoon, there were squalls. We met a British mail steamer coming from La Luz on an opposite course

LAS PALMAS

and at a very short distance away. Our salute remained unanswered.

At 5 p.m., we reached La Luz pier, and the harbour of Las Palmas. A fine local schooner reefed down left the harbour pitching heavily. We exchanged courteous greetings.

Bearing away, we entered the harbour and then beat up to the far end of it. We were delighted to catch sight of French colours: the *Président Théodore Tissier* of the *Office Scientifique des Pêches*, the Scientific Fisheries Service. Friendly hands waved at the small cutter flying the same colours from the peak.

I anchored within a cable of my compatriot. Another stage was concluded.

CHAPTER V

IN THE CANARIES: THE ODYSSEY OF BERLIN

HARDLY had *Kurun* slid into her berth before the launch of the *Président Théodore Tissier*, bearing her captain, Commander Kermarec, came to call on us. The tunny-fish, tied to the lifeline at the stern, immediately drew the attention of our visitors. 'Did you keep their guts?' they asked. No, we had thrown them overboard, with the exception of the liver, one of my favourite dishes. It turned out that they were in search of tunny-fish for the purpose of studying their migrations and their method of reproduction. They had been less fortunate than we during the previous days.

From the entrails of fish, we passed to other topics and were cordially invited to visit the *Tissier* and, when there, were pressed to stay to dinner. The scientific mission consisted of three very pleasant young men who, like most of the crew, were Bretons. They all flocked to see our cutter. The wireless operator came to inspect the radio, the engineers to have a look at the windlass. They gave us fresh water and, until the 19th when the *Tissier* left for the Azores, we had a standing invitation to the captain's table, at which the atmosphere was truly genial.

The harbour of La Luz, which serves Las Palmas, the neighbouring capital of the island, is very picturesque. The bay is most beautifully framed by the mountains, but its charm derives mainly from the many wooden sailing vessels, mostly fishing schooners, that give La Luz the air of an old-world sailing town, an impression that is strengthened by the sight of vessels hove down in the good old style. By this method, carpenters can change any part of the planking at their leisure, and even large ships can be caulked right down to the keel. The scene, however, would be lacking a yet more important quality if it were not for the men: time has left them their rough-hewn buccaneers' faces. For that matter, they have retained more of the pirate than the outward appearance, as one quickly learns. The *Tissier* did. One night, they left the port-

THE PIRATES OF LA LUZ

holes open. The wily scoundrels hooked a tidy haul; they were caught in the act but they were so nimble that it proved impossible to overtake their craft.

La Luz is not merely a fishing harbour, but, lying as it does on a junction of major sea routes, it has the bustle of a large port. Las Palmas and La Luz are two sister towns linked by bus, a journey of a few minutes. The vehicles are antiquated French models.

Upon arrival, *Kurun* was submitted to the usual formalities, but without fuss or bother, though her captain had not hastened to seek out the authorities. We were pleasantly received by the French Consul, M. Martin, who had been informed of our arrival. At a reception held at the Chancellery, we met the captain of the *Tissier*, his staff and a number of our compatriots; I was pleased to find that Grand Canary had a small but thriving French colony.

Grand Canary has a *Real Club Nautico* housed in an enormous building with vast rooms; it towers over a basin and from its windows can be seen the fine-looking masts of a number of yachts. I noticed with pleasure some representatives of classes such as the Tumlars, Hispania and Traversia, apart from several small cruisers. I had not expected to find so much yachting activity but I was told that regattas were frequently held and that every year the larger yachts went for a cruise through the archipelago.

The President of the Club, Enrique Martinez Suarez, had sent us a message of welcome immediately upon our arrival, together with the offer of the use of his club; his note was headed with an inscription that we found charming:

Saluda

al Señor Capitán y tripulantes del yate Kurun

(Greetings to the Captain and crew of the yacht *Kurun*).

After the departure of the *Tissier*, we moved *Kurun* to a berth nearer the Club, though we were tactfully warned that we should be no safer from pirates there. We were soon on an extremely friendly footing with the Club members and a few days after our arrival a party was held at which we were the guests of honour. We sat at an immense table surrounded by Club members whose linguistic abilities were as limited as those of the crew of *Kurun*. Conversation was restricted, but that drawback was adequately made up for by the flagons of Xeres that were in circulation. I

IN THE CANARIES

doubt whether the Club servants paused for one moment in filling glass after glass. Dios! Spain must produce a lot of sherry to keep up supplies for this sort of thing.

When the guests were taken back by car to their respective craft, hardly a man of them could stand on his legs. I confused *Kurun* with the *Tissier* in the most shocking manner. Farge had been cleverer, having contrived to pour most of his drink on the floor, but that had not been possible for 'Señor Capitan'.

As the time came for us to leave, the President presented me with a very fine burgee of embroidered silk in the colours of the *Real Club Nautico*, a gift that quite eclipsed the burgee of the C.V.P. which I gave him.

During our stay at La Luz, we went for several walks on the beautiful island to enjoy its varied scenery. Grand Canary has been described as a continent in miniature, and this can be said to apply both to its landscape and to its amazingly diversified produce.

A visit to the Museum is instructive in anthropology. We were gratified to learn that a Frenchman, Professor Verneau, had worked there for many years and that the Museum owes much to his researches. Its collection of human skulls is impressive and is by no means as macabre as might be thought. They are quite handsome skulls!

One memorable exhibit is an enormous skeleton which, if it is not some playful freak of Nature, must have belonged, many, many years ago, to a Guanche. According to a theory ardently advocated by Bory de Saint-Vincent, the Guanches of the Canaries, together with the Berbers of Africa, were the last tribes of Atlantis, said to be descended from Cro-Magnon Man. When the Spanish conquistadors arrived in the fifteenth century, the Guanches, though in many ways still in their stone age, had acquired some rudiments of civilization. The Museum contains some amazing specimens of their ceramic art. Like the Egyptians, the Guanches embalmed their corpses. The delicate and painstaking perfection of their work, the fine stitching done with fish-bone needles, can still be admired in the goatskins in which they wrapped their mummies.

In the interior of the island, the big-boned, fair-haired Guanche types can still be encountered, a healthy and hardworking people.

THE MÜLLERS ARRIVE

They no longer praise Alcoran, but they have a strong family tradition; in this outpost of the world, far from modern sensationalism, they perpetuate a facet of pre-history.

On April 24th, a totally unexpected event occurred to disturb our placid yachting world. I was privileged to meet two courageous people whose story is one of the most extraordinary tales of the sea that I know: Paul Müller, aged sixty-four, and his daughter Aga, aged eighteen and a half.

I was painstakingly varnishing my deck-house once again, cursing the futility of varnished woodwork on long voyages, when my attention was distracted from my work by an uproar of Spanish voices. Rowing boats, propelled by madly excited oarsmen, were towing a small craft scarcely larger than themselves, with all her sails still set. At the cabin door stood a very young girl.

By her German flag I immediately recognised the small craft as *Berlin* which, I knew, had recently left Germany; I knew also of her visit to England and of her future plans. Of her pilot, I knew nothing personally, and my first reaction was scathing: 'A madman, to hurl himself into the Bay of Biscay in winter in so tiny a craft—how on earth did he succeed in getting as far as here!'

When the yacht was anchored, I went over in our pram, for I had noticed how exhausted her crew looked. I knew only too well what coming in from the high seas feels like, with one's eyes full of salt and puffed from lack of sleep. I felt like kicking away the oafs who were hanging about gaping at these poor folk who were beginning to look like hunted animals.

I greeted Müller and suggested that he should tie up alongside *Kurun*. He hesitated at first as he looked at her and observed the tricolour, but in a few moments we had manoeuvred *Berlin* into a good position alongside my boat.

Berlin had a meagre stock of provisions. We realized, even before we all sat down to a substantial meal on board *Kurun*, that we were going to get on well together. Müller had remarked, 'We are told that the French and the Germans are enemies . . .', to which I had replied, 'All good sailors belong to one large family.' The foolish quarrels of nations were meaningless to us.

Every day we talked for hours about deep-sea sailing and great voyages, for Müller was no novice at the art. As early as 1929, he

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had made a single-handed crossing of the Atlantic in a 19-ft. boat called *Aga*, which he had later lost off Cape Hatteras on his way from the Bahamas to New York. This time he had decided to leave Germany for good. His house was in the Russian zone. In spite of his age, he had not hesitated to make the effort to escape with his daughter on board a small sailing vessel and head for South America; there he hoped to earn some money, enough to be able to bring his wife and son over to join him. 'I would like', he said, 'to build up my home again in peace and security.'

He had chosen a rowing boat that he had discovered on the Berlin Wannsee. Her hull, 18 ft. 4 in. by 6 ft., was soundly built and he had paid two thousand marks for her. His friends declared he was insane, but Müller set to work, making judicious alterations to the craft. He added a wooden keel, to which he had bolted a cast-iron keel of about nine hundred pounds in weight, thus giving the boat a draught of 3 ft. 4 in. He then completely decked her in, forming a cabin that occupied the whole width except for a small watertight cockpit 23 in. long and 17 in. deep, which is not very much. The only entrance to the cabin was through a sliding panel at the after end of the cabin top and two port-holes had been cut near the bow. Apart from these and the panel, it had no ventilation.

The rig was simple but very sturdy: a mast held up by a fore-stay and two pairs of strong shrouds; a triangular mainsail laced to the mast and to a stout boom; and a staysail but no bowsprit. Altogether she carried less than 135 square feet of canvas, without reefs or rolling reefing gear. In a strong wind Müller took in all his sail and rode to a sea anchor over the stern as is customary because it gives a better balance with less strain on the rudder. After the loss of the sea anchor, *Berlin* behaved perfectly under bare poles across the sea. Voss and Marin Marie had advocated this solution, which, incidentally, had proved entirely satisfactory with *Kurun*.

Owing to lack of means, the interior accommodation was nil: no lockers, no bunks, stores and clothes heaped up in a corner. They slept on brass-bound boxes, without mattresses, the one on the starboard side being about the right length for the pilot, the other on the port side, which was about 3 ft. 4 in., having to suffice for young Aga.

When they arrived, everything on board was drenched, and

THE ODYSSEY OF BERLIN

when they put their things out next day to dry, it was pitiful to see how few they were. In a rubber bag they kept two dictionaries, some photographs, the ship's log and a few knick-knacks. The sea had not spared even these.

Müller had no papers at all; nor had *Berlin*. Aga had a British passport. The two navigators had lived almost exclusively on potatoes, which had not been improved by being drenched in sea water. How they managed to cook in that confined space on a Primus stove which was not even fixed was a miracle to me. But Müller was a man of prodigious energy. In August 1949 he had sailed down the Elbe, passed Hamburg, and, after a number of peregrinations, reached Dutch waters. After a stay at Gravelines and a number of halts along the south coast of England, he had made Ireland from Milford Haven. Both the British and the Irish had received him sympathetically and had given him generous help.

On February 20th 1950 he had taken his astounding decision, and they had set out from the Irish harbour of Kinsale to cross the Bay of Biscay. At such a time of the year, it was more than enterprising. *Berlin* encountered storm after storm, at times riding at her sea-anchor for days on end, without a stitch of sail, in furious seas. Swept overboard on one occasion, Müller had managed to crawl back into the minute cockpit with the aid of his mooring rope. With skill and patience, he had utilised the slightest favourable factor to make headway. On March 14th, twenty-two days after starting out, he had come within sight of Cape Finisterre which he tried to round. Over and over again, he was thrust back into the Bay and on March 22nd he had had to run for shelter at Linarca, a small Spanish harbour situated about sixty miles east of Cape Ortegal. On March 26th, he had set out with a north wind and two days later had at last rounded Finisterre. He had sailed rapidly south down the coast, calling at a few places on the way. From Portugal, he had made a fine crossing, in spite of three days spent hove-to in bad weather. He had been again washed overboard but had again managed to climb back. On that occasion, he had lost his sea anchor, its small cable having chafed through. From Portugal he had made Las Palmas after eleven days at sea, which is a remarkable feat.

I often discussed the navigation of these small craft with Müller

IN THE CANARIES

He was a bold and courageous sailor possessed of sterling qualities, common sense, and an optimism that bordered on nonchalance. I often wondered about that; perhaps it was because his resources were so limited. He had known Erling Tambs and, like myself, admired his *Teddy*, a superior type of ocean cruiser, though this had not prevented him from venturing in so minute a craft as *Berlin* without documents or instruments other than a compass and a chart for the North Atlantic. It was no wonder that on arriving at the Canaries he had had no idea which of the islands he had lighted upon. Chance had brought him to Las Palmas; he had hoped to make for Teneriffe, some sixty miles further west.

To go from the Canaries to South America via Freetown on the coast of Africa, as his plan was, was not rational, considering the prevailing winds, doldrums and sea currents. Charts in hand, I tried to persuade him to take the other route via the Cape Verde Islands, but to no avail.

During their stay at La Luz, the crew of *Berlin* met with much kindness from more than one source. *Kurun's* crew did what they could to help from their own modest resources. I quite enjoyed my scrupulous inspection of their rigging, and found one or two weak places to renew. I made the masthole as watertight as possible, for that was the point at which most of the water made its way into the cabin. I also intended to repair the jib, but unfortunately there was too little time for that.

On May 1st, at 2.30 p.m., *Berlin* set off for Freetown. Theirs was a strangely moving departure—so small a craft setting out on so long a voyage roused emotions that bordered on the painful. Aga Müller, especially, controlled her feelings with difficulty.

During our conversations, Müller had often said, ‘When we are settled in South America, you must come and visit us and stay as long as you like.’ Poor Müller! He was to die on the Liberian coast, and his daughter had to put out to sea with her father’s body aboard, for the natives were beginning to pillage the unguarded boat—a tragic incident.

The news shocked me deeply when I heard it at Cristobal-Colon. It was a sad ending to such wonderful victories over the elements. Courage aside, Müller’s memory deserves homage for his sterling seaman’s qualities. I have heard that he was a chemist of considerable repute; as to that, I cannot say, but I do know that

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he was a simple, kindly man as are the majority of those who have ripened in wisdom through familiarity with the sea.

To me, Aga Müller exemplifies energy, tenacity and calm determination; she stands out among women, and many men could follow her example with advantage. Too many young people prefer to accept a life of ease, putting comfort first. Ever since she and her father had left Germany, Aga had suffered from seasickness, and existence on board a tiny boat on the high seas must have put a considerable strain on her. She deserves to be saluted as a model of courage and filial devotion.

CHAPTER VI

CROSSING THE ATLANTIC

WE would have liked to prolong our stay at Grand Canary, amidst the fruit and flowers, but the season of cyclones in the Caribbean Sea was approaching and the next part of our trip could no longer be postponed. I was resolved not to be overtaken by rough weather and had made up my mind to spend the bad season in the Panama region.

As *Kurun's* bottom was not as clean as it should have been, I decided to careen her, easy enough at La Luz owing to the great difference between the tides. For one moment I had thought of setting out at the same time as *Berlin* in order to have the pleasure of sailing, at least for a time, side by side with the gallant craft, but as it happened we were not ready to start when she left.

Thanks to our friend Bordes, the boat was provided with all necessities and even with luxuries. Food was piled up in our galley: stems of bananas, hampers of tomatoes, crates of oranges, carrots, onions, lettuces—all sorts of delicacies to tempt our appetites, including an item worthy of special mention, an enormous *queso de flores*, a flower-flavoured cheese which proved to be delicious. Embarrassed by all these attentions, I had declared the boat was already overloaded, but I could not escape before I had been forced to accept a pair of hair-clippers and a clothes-brush—which at any rate were an addition to the inventory!

In spite of the general belief, the crossing of the Atlantic in a sailing boat on the trades, however small the boat, is an exceedingly easy undertaking with few hazards. It has become a commonfeat during recent years and can now hardly be called an achievement. These east-to-west crossings have often enabled sensation-mongers to perform feats that have astounded the public. In actual fact, spending a few days in a well-found ship in the Bay of Biscay holds more risks than crossing the Atlantic from end to end in a modest sort of craft. Off our shores, humble, obscure fishermen daily perform more dangerous if less spectacular feats.

'ANTICIPATING A FINE CROSSING'

It hardly needs a meteorological expert to predict the kind of weather that may be expected on an east-west voyage in the trade winds. A glance at the pilot chart shows: (1) that the wind is always free; (2) that calm is rare; and (3) that gales hardly ever occur. On the whole, ideal sailing conditions. The early Spanish Navigators called this stretch of the Atlantic *el golfo de las damas*—ladies' sea—and indeed it presents neither dangers nor difficulties.

From the Canaries to the Antilles, the quickest route for a sailing ship is not the straight line but a concave curve, for the northern limit of the north-east trade wind has a southward bulge. (Ignorance of this elementary meteorological fact was one of the causes of the unfortunate crossing made by Alain Gerbault in *Firecrest*.)

I was banking on these fairly regular conditions. 'I am anticipating a fine crossing,' I wrote to my parents, 'and I hope to be on the other side within a month.'

Yet I encountered winds much stronger than I had expected, followed by light variable winds and unforeseen calms before at last I gained a good trade wind well to the south of the tropic.

I learned later the reason for these unusual meteorological conditions. During the winter of 1949-1950 and the following spring, the polar ice limit had descended far to the south, thus retarding the seasonal northward movement of tropical conditions together with the trade winds. The deep-sea fishermen had encountered considerable ice-fields on the Newfoundland Banks as late as the end of April and beginning of May, whereas these ice-fields usually disappear early in March. Normally, therefore, in following the route I did, I should have been well to the south of the zone of variable winds.

May 2nd. 1.15 p.m. We set out from the *Real Club Nautico*. The moment we weighed anchor, we began making good progress. The pilot boat, as we passed close by her, gave us a shout to tell us that we were going to run into some wind and seas. Standing at the helm, I pointed with a smile to *Kurun's* powerful stern, and shouted back, 'It's wind we need!'

Suspended from the boom bearer was a curious plant called the aerial carnation, which has succulent, waxy leaves and no earth roots, and is supposed to draw all its nutriment from the air. M. Bordes had taken it from his magnificent garden, remarking as he

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gave it to me that it would live to accompany me round the world.

At 1.30 p.m., we rounded the pier of La Luz, our sails filling to a fine northerly breeze, and *Kurun* began to swing gently in the swell. Before long, the houses of Las Palmas and the temple in which Christopher Columbus prayed before setting sail for America were abaft the beam.

Not having had lunch, we now ate a frugal meal of ham, bread and butter and oranges, though without much appetite. The breeze freshened steadily, the sea grew rougher and visibility became poor. Farge took over the helm while I tidied the cutter and stowed the anchor with its chain and cable in the forepeak, but he was unable to keep the boat running before the wind and we drew further and further away from land, though I should have liked to have studied the coastline more closely. At 4 p.m., we left Point Gando to the west and then we gybed. The wind was blowing still harder and I had had to shorten sail more than once so that in the end I had only the mainsail set with six rolls in and No. 3 jib well sheeted in flat.

Big ships heading north were pitching heavily. The rollers were increasing in size, their foamy crests toppling over. I took in the mainsail and we continued on our way quite comfortably and without shipping a drop of water with only No. 3 jib. By midnight, we were nearly past Maspalomas, the southern point of Grand Canary. The wind had gradually eased. By daylight, the land had sunk below the horizon. I had asked Farge, whose watch it was, to note when the lighthouse ceased to be visible; he had forgotten to do so. It was a small matter, but it annoyed me, for a similar lapse might have very serious consequences on another occasion.

My companion had turned out to be a forgetful type, constantly neglecting to wind the chronometer in spite of my insistence. I had surmised pretty quickly how far I could rely on him but to make certain I had once or twice put him to the test. If the chronometer is not wound regularly and stops, it means longitude cannot be determined, for when a sextant observation is made the time must be noted to the second. In any ship, large or small, the person responsible for the chronometer has no business to forget—the consequences may be grave.

CALMS AND GALES

Mere breaths of wind throughout the morning and early afternoon; the boat rolled her rail under in a rough, choppy sea without making the slightest headway. Late in the afternoon, the wind freshened rapidly and at 5.30 p.m. we were forced to heave-to under No. 3 jib and the mainsail with five rolls down. Even so, we were carrying too much sail and at 7.15 p.m., *Kurun* lay-to under her main stormsail, the helm lashed amidships. A sudden gale hit us and the sea grew rougher. We were to remain hove-to for some thirty-six hours, for most of which we slept.

On the 4th, the weather was even worse. I set a small storm-jib tacked on the stem. As far as the eye could reach, white-capped breakers could be seen, but *Kurun* rode them like a bird. Nevertheless, we took some heavy seas aboard; it only needs one bad sea to bring the boat by the lee for the next wave to break over her before the head has been brought round. We were under water several times amidships by the cabin top, but we were free of water forward.

Farge became a little nervous and began to talk of the sea-anchor, asking if I had ever experienced such weather before. 'This isn't much,' I told him, 'you'll see a lot worse!'

At last we were able to make sail again, for which I was not sorry as the deck, which had shrunk a little in the heat, had been letting some water through, and so had the scuttle over my bunk. The weather had now improved enough for us to be able to keep port-holes and sliding panel open, so that everything could dry out.

I had decided to stand in for 20° N. 30° W. During the first few days, though there was only a moderate wind (velocity 3 to 4), we covered a fair distance, but after that we fell back into a succession of weak breezes and calms. We did not have favourable sailing conditions until the evening of May 19th, seventeen days out.

Yet, on the whole, it was a period of fine weather. The temperature rose as we went further south and the sea was calm. The nights were pleasant, too, with the Plough to starboard and the Southern Cross to port. The only drawback was that we had to stay at the helm night and day, the wind being insufficient to allow us to sail with only the twin staysails. Their area was too far below that of our ordinary sail so we had to keep all sail set, which made it impossible for *Kurun* to keep on a true course by herself.

CROSSING THE ATLANTIC

On May 8th, just before 4 a.m., Farge, whose watch it was, sighted a steamer to port, the only ship we were to meet for the whole of that crossing. Later, that afternoon, we tried the twin staysails for the first time. I had spent the major part of the day arranging the rigging accordingly. The experiment was not encouraging; the wind was too light and in the end I took in the staysails and carried on in the normal way.

The 10th brought some animation into our lives. We had observed some schools of bonitoes leaping out of the water when suddenly, towards the east, we sighted a herd of whales. I soon identified them by their massive heads as ca'ing whales. They were swimming in the same direction as we were, overtaking us. I managed to approach them by luffing a little and keeping the sails just quivering so that we could enjoy watching their convolutions at our leisure. Farge took a series of photographs while I, Mauser in hand, waited for the chance of a shot. My companion became a little impatient at my slow deliberation, but I never like wasting powder and I was interested only in the largest of them. At last, one huge specimen surfaced about a quarter of a cable on the port beam. By an odd coincidence I killed it stone-dead with a shot in the head just as Farge had focussed the blackfish in his telelens.

For a short while, the monster seemed welded to the surface, but before we could sail up to it, it rolled over and sank. We did not even have time to get the harpoon out, which was a pity as I should have liked to have studied the animal, about which relatively little is known.

Though not particularly lucky in our hunting, we had succeeded in reaching the Tropic of Cancer. And this seemed a good opportunity for the captain to deliver a short address to his crew: 'Categories and classifications are the hobby-horses of the world. Here human beings are divided into those who have and those who have not crossed the Tropic. To celebrate the occasion, I order the mainbrace to be spliced.'

We spliced the mainbrace with alacrity.

At midday, we ate the last of the ten salad meals we had taken on board at La Luz. Farge, though a marvellous cook, had been neglecting the stores, and on inspection I found that the major part of the tomatoes had rotted and would have to be thrown away; green when given us, they had ripened remarkably quickly.

WE REACH THE TROPICS

On the 13th, before lunch, I espied our first pilot fish, which was joined later by others. They followed us right to the Antilles with faithful perseverance. Possibly the pilot fish is a lazy creature that likes to take advantage of the bow wave to have itself pushed across the ocean; it is certainly the sailor's steadfast companion in the region of the trade winds. As a rule, the pilot fish accompanies sharks, and these voracious tigers of the sea seem to leave it alone.

On the 15th, I noticed to my annoyance that the brass sheet protecting the mast where the jaws of the gaff chafed it had worked loose as a result of the constant wear of the rigging in light breezes and calms. The next day, therefore, having taken in the mainsail, I did some acrobatics in the rigging. I fixed the brass sheet back on the mast as efficiently as I could with lashings. Then having set the mainsail again, I put my mind to the problem of the twin staysails, which I reckoned I could now set in a steady wind. I made topping-lifts fast to the aftermost shrouds to support the swinging booms.

On the 17th, we were becalmed: the weather was as fine as could be desired, a clear sky, an intensely blue sea of a fabulous transparency. A yellow-bellied tropic-bird with two long, slender tail-feathers came by in a jerky flight as if to warn us, 'Make use of the fine weather, friends, while it lasts. The winds are going to make you sit up before long.'

Before lunch we enjoyed a swim in grand style. Usually we had a swim under the bobstay with a line handy, or a bath on deck with large buckets of water. But on this day *Kurun* was motionless, and we could move freely without having to hang on to a rope. It gave us a curious feeling, to be swimming stark-naked in mid-ocean with the unfathomable depths beneath us, a feeling of oppressive insecurity, especially as we could never be entirely oblivious of the possibility of roving sharks.

A day of *dolce far niente*. Farge spent it toying with the two binnacle lamps, which never seemed to function properly. Tea, buttered toast, jam, honey, rum, milk, and lemon. The crew were far from unhappy.

On the 18th, at 10.30 a.m., I made sail again, setting everything including the balloon jib close-hauled on the starboard tack: an unexpected wind came from the south-west, soon north-west, veer-

CROSSING THE ATLANTIC

ing north toward nightfall. Where on earth are those wretched trade winds?

We were now sailing with the helm lashed, availing ourselves of the occasion to tidy up. We had used the last of the new-laid eggs two days before and we decided to open the case of eggs sold us by our Moroccan supplier. 'You can keep those eggs by for six months, without inconvenience,' he had said. They were all bad, some of them even exploding at a touch. Overboard they went, case and all, to be joined by the last of the bananas which were also rotten. The weather was splendid and to demonstrate that we were delighted with life, we had a bottle of white wine with our lunch.

May 19th. This day was devoted to the captain's patron saint, St. Yves. In his honour, presumably, the wind began to blow in earnest that afternoon, accompanied by a heavy swell that stayed with us as far as Martinique. Lunch, enlivened by some extras, brought us to the end of our carrots, which we always ate raw.

The wind was now blowing steadily and from the right quarter. I decided on May 21st to set the twin staysails so that we should no longer have to bother with steering. I had solved the problem of the staysails satisfactorily, if with extempore means. For the very first time, I was able to watch my cutter keeping to a steady course, running before the wind with no one at the helm. It was a rare pleasure to see the tiller moving from side to side while the boat kept steadily to her course. (Appendix B will give some indication of what arrangements can be made to ensure automatic navigation for a variety of sailing trim.) At 8.37 a.m., my observations gave our position as $19^{\circ} 04' N.$ $39^{\circ} 56' W.$

That day, May 21st, a minute flying fish came sailing into the cabin through the open sliding panel. It measured one and three-quarter inches from head to tail. The flying fish were rather scarce; the few that landed on the deck at night were too small to deserve the frying pan.

Once the twin staysails were in action, there was an end to steering until we reached Martinique. It was fine going, crossing half the Atlantic in ten days, under reduced sail, running before the wind, without a soul at the helm! A fine life: good sleep and plenty of spare time. A fresh breeze, beautiful sea, enough swell to prevent observations from becoming dull routine work—especially at night.

A FINE LIFE

Life was peaceful, bathing a pleasure; we had our lunches in the open air, up forward. We strolled about on deck and pottered. The sea, though agitated, was of a brilliant blue. *Kurun* maintained a fine speed and, what pleased me even more, a steady speed. Day after day, I was able to mark an advance of approximately 110 miles on the chart, which was not bad going with so little sail. Obviously, the absence of the mainsail meant that we rolled rather more, reminding me of dancing a java.

As we were clear of all navigation routes, we could sleep peacefully under the protection of the ship's light at the masthead. The 25th was devoted to cleanliness and elegance. With the hair-clippers given us by Bordes, we cut each other's hair. Farge would not do badly as a hairdresser; he was clever at it and made an artistic job of my head. I, unfortunately for him, lacked his talent and found myself hacking away at my patient friend's pate. He was, luckily, no less pleased with his appearance than I with mine.

After my hair-cut, I had a shave. My beard had been growing unchecked since we had left the Canaries. Now we once more had a groomed, civilized appearance. Farge retained a beautiful fringe beard which made him look like a tough old salt.

May 26th. The starboard water-cask ran dry. We had been using water as we needed it, without rationing ourselves. I did not feel like opening the other cask, so we fixed a siphon to one of the four-gallon tanks in the stern.

Sunday, May 28th. Farge read the Whitsun office on deck. *Kurun* was still running most regularly, which emboldened me to say, 'Next Sunday, you'll be able to go to mass at Fort de France. If the breeze holds, we shall see Caravelle lighthouse on Thursday night.'

That afternoon, I gave the pram a coat of paint.

May 30th. With the coming of daylight, we observed a marked change in the colour of the sea, from brilliant blue to olive green. Marin Marie had commented on this phenomenon on his voyage to Martinique in his *Winnibelle II*. Was it due to the currents? A curious and unexpected result was that the ubiquitous pilot fish took on a splendid blue-purple hue.

The next day, the water was less green and after that it returned steadily to blue. Shoals of flying fish rose before us and a host of gulls heralded the proximity of land.

After sunset, the wind freshened and the sea became even

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rougher. Towards 10.30 p.m. we shipped an enormous sea that spilled over into the cabin, most of the water, however, pouring on to the floor; my calculations, which were on the chart table, received only some spray. I had calculated my position by the stars that morning, and I did so again at twilight. We should be making our landsfall the next day—and not by chance!

An exhausted bird tried to settle on deck.

I decided that watch had again to be kept at night as the boat was making fine progress towards the land. By the log, we had covered 120 miles in twenty-four hours.

Thursday, June 1st. At 3.40 a.m., Farge, on watch, thought he could see lights N. $\frac{1}{4}$ N.W. Again I made calculations by the stars before dawn. Without a doubt, land should appear that afternoon. At 10 a.m., Farge was sure he could see land in the far distance, on the starboard bow. I climbed the mast and wondered whether it wasn't a ship. There were many clouds on the horizon.

During the 4 p.m. watch, I made an entry in the log: 'Am a little surprised that we haven't sighted land yet. Visibility mediocre.' I made an observation by the sun, but did not have to use it.

Realizing it would be necessary to take in the staysails and return to normal sail to round Martinique and call at Fort de France, I was working forward and, happening to look up, saw straight ahead the land rising in sharp clarity. I called Farge. 'Land straight ahead. Splice the mainbrace.' The binnacle watch showed 5.18 p.m.

Wreathed in mist, the land could not be identified. Before long, it vanished, not to reappear until after sunset. Then, Caravelle lighthouse sprang into action straight ahead of us. Our landsfall had been perfect. I hauled down the staysails and reset one of them without a boom.

My first intention had been to round the island by the south, but now I changed my plan, recollecting that to the south of Caravelle Peninsula the coast is made dangerous by numerous cays, whereas to the north it is perfectly safe. At night, I prefer peaceful navigation.

Farge prepared an excellent cup of coffee before turning in. I shipped a sea that washed my feet for me as I sat at the helm. At 10.55 p.m., I passed within half a cable of the Caravelle rock; it looked wonderful in the brilliant moonlight. The sea was breaking

LANDFALL

on the rocks and *Kurun* was rising and falling on the breakers. I stayed at the helm all night. With the single staysail I was not making much headway but I wanted to see the dawn breaking over the land. The wind was becoming blustery.

I passed the sand-banks: Loup Ministre, Loup Sainte Marie, Rocher Pain de Sucre, Pointe du Marigot, names unmistakably belonging to Martinique. I was sleepy, but happy in being in charge of everything.

At dawn, I had hardly rounded the north of the island before the sun revealed the magnificence of the landscape. On passing the rock of La Perle Island, I thought of the day, early in the century, when my father made his landfall during his first voyage in a fine three-masted sailing ship, painted light blue, the *Fort-de-France*; he had rounded the island by the south, passing close under the imposing Rocher du Diamant. Pearl and Diamond; with half a century between us, our hearts must have beaten with like enthusiasm.

I sailed all the morning with little wind, hugging the shore and absorbing the charm of the picturesque scenery. Passing close by Bourg du Prêcheur we could see the fishermen busy with a seine. Sea-mews, monarchs of the sea and sky, sailed majestically overhead, high above the water. Then we caught sight of our first Indian canoes. I admired the skill with which they were handled, these single gum-tree trunks, hollowed out and reinforced by a few ribs, their sides raised by a planking. They carry a spritsail and are exceedingly fast. The crew have to maintain the balance, especially in a strong wind, and, although handling them looked a tricky business to me, I never saw one capsize. And the natives go long distances in them, even venturing out of sight of land.

At ten in the morning, *Kurun* was abreast of Saint Pierre, where traces of the horrible catastrophe caused by the eruption of Mont Pelé in 1902 could still be seen.

We tidied up the ship and smartened ourselves. At 11.15 p.m. we set our normal sail again, but almost immediately afterwards had to take the mainsail in three rolls, for the breeze freshened considerably. Heavy seaward gusts bore down on us and I was amazed at the way the canoes stood up to them. Every time our cutter heeled over under the pressure, I expected them all to turn turtle, but not one of them did.

CROSSING THE ATLANTIC

At the entrance to Fort de France Bay, the breeze, as I had anticipated, was fresh and dead ahead. After making some lamentable tacks, tossing about on a choppy sea, with our third staysail set and the mainsail with three rolls in and the sheets eased, I decided to set plenty of sail and take the place by storm. As it was ready bent I set the fore-staysail, a sail of some 165 square feet, and flattened in my other sails. Never before had I driven my boat so hard. Her lee rail awash, *Kurun* leapt forward like a race-horse and tore into the wind, which was whistling in the rigging, with foam and spray flying. But the boat could take it and I kept her full without easing her through it.

Thousands of small flying fish scattered like silver shavings before our bows. The bay of Fort de France grew clearer and clearer before us. Suddenly, Farge, who was forward, gave a startled shout, 'Rock ahead.' I knew there wasn't a rock anywhere near, for I had studied the charts carefully. Still—. Somewhat shaken, I rushed forward and arrived just in time to see a giant turtle plunging.

Ashore they were waiting for us, having observed our small cutter with her tanned sails beating across the bay as if the devil were after her. Rounding Fort St. Louis, we anchored about a hundred and fifty feet from the quay of the Yacht Club at 5 p.m.

A crossing without trouble.

CHAPTER VII

MARTINIQUE: CROSSING THE CARIBBEAN

WE were received with great cordiality and the traditional Martinique punch at the Club. All vied to entertain us, to organize trips in our honour, to heap kindnesses on us, so that our stay, however long, was bound to seem short. After a month at sea, I appreciated to the full the balmy nights on the island, echoing with the song of the cicadas.

The Martinique Yacht Club boasts a fine flotilla of yachts and the owners of them are strong advocates of sail. The seas round Martinique are enchanting; the bay of Fort de France is magnificent and all round its coast the island possesses sundry small bays which afford ideal shelter for yachts.

The yachts sail for the sheer pleasure of sailing, fishing and engaging in races that are hotly contested. I was amazed to see how hard some club members drove their boats. One of them took me for a sail in his yacht, *Paulo*; he drove her so hard that the cabin top was in the water and the keel just about in the air. But it is a fine sport in the warm zephyrs of the trade wind, blowing from the island heights, rippling the calm waters of the bay without disturbing them.

Fort de France lacks urban beauty. Deep runnels necessary for draining away the superfluous water brought down by the tropical rainstorms spoil its streets, but the people lend them gaiety and colour: a motley crowd of athletic negroes and their nonchalant *doudous*, coloured in every tone from black to white. And in the markets, piles of fruit heaped up in tropical prodigality—pineapples, mangoes, papaws, avocado pears—add even more to the vivid colour of the scene.

The island is known as the Pearl of the Caribbean. Green predominates in all its shades: the light green of the sugar cane plantations to the deeper green of the tropical vegetation. The rugged mountains form a high background to the scenery, and in the

MARTINIQUE

valleys, narrow between the mountains, rivers give life to the luxuriant undergrowth.

The coastal belt is even more enchanting. There the exuberant tropical vegetation plunges its roots right into the sea and the shore is dotted with small fishing villages where drying nets and the brightly painted native canoes add a glow to the landscape. The negroes who live there are skilful sailors and the existence they lead seems to have preserved them, partially at any rate, from the inroads of our civilization.

During the war, Martinique was made into a full French *département*, but not all the people concerned have welcomed this gesture, especially as it has involved them in the sordid political quarrels that thrive in Paris.

Owing to the kindness of a friend, a captain of the gendarmes, we were present one day at the elections in a small, charming village called Case Pilote. Apparently, these occasions are always attended by colourful celebrations with much collective dancing and drinking, and, under cover of the general excitement, the crudest tricks are played, even going as far as the substitution of spurious ballot-boxes.

We made the acquaintance of the Bishop of Martinique; on our first visit to him, we found him digging in his garden, which task he interrupted with kindly cordiality.

During a visit to the harbour of Le Robert, on the east coast of the island, I had an opportunity of inspecting the curious double outrigger canoe *Ananda* in which André Sadrin and two companions had crossed the Atlantic from the Cape Verde Islands to Martinique in seventeen days. The hull of the canoe, while she was beached, had been turned into gruyère by borers and was utterly ruined. The rigging looked bedraggled; the skimpy cabin had been emptied, a photograph of Shri Aurobindo pinned to the wall being the only relic of the life that had once animated the craft. She looked like a large, mortally wounded bird.

I was asked to give a lecture. As I am not keen on talking, I did my best to evade the task, but at last I succumbed to the blandishments of the Club President, M. Germon. That evening was an occasion, a 'Soirée de la Marine' in honour of *Kurun*. Films of Fort de France yachting were shown, after which I gave a short talk on the voyage of *Kurun*, aided by photographs taken by

A NEW COAT OF PAINT

Farge. The evening had a surprising outcome. A few days later, M. Germon handed me a cheque for the amount of the takings of the lecture. It was a welcome addition to our slender resources. We were able to turn it into dollars that proved very useful to us in Panama.

For the next stage of our journey, the boat had to be scrubbed and repainted. To get the boat out of the water presented a delicate problem, for there are no tides at Martinique. M. Grant, a naval architect, offered to have *Kurun* hoisted on to his slipway and to let me keep her there free of charge. This was remarkably friendly of him, for the presence of my cutter was bound to disorganize the work in his yard in one way or another.

On June 21st, *Kurun* was on the slip. Farge and I began the cleaning and scrubbing of the bottom: the topsides were washed, rubbed down, and then given three coats of good white paint, with a coat of copper paint underwater.

On June 29th, *Kurun* was launched again. I had made a new waterline three inches higher than the old one. Entirely repainted, her name picked out in bright red, *Kurun* looked magnificent.

In the Canaries, I had not been able to paint the points where the shoring rested on the deck, and two or three borers had been at work, though the damage they had done was not serious. I sealed the holes and covered the points with copper sheathing. The waters of warm latitudes are dangerous for unprotected woodwork and the hulls of sailing vessels in the tropics demand constant and meticulous attention.

The *Compagnie Générale Transatlantique*, which had an excellent organization in Fort de France, kindly agreed to have a special piece of gear made to improve my system of twin staysails for use when sailing before the wind. I had designed a small tripod mast, independent of the stays; the mast made by the *Compagnie* proved fully adequate in practice.

Our friend Grant brought me a sheet of copper to replace the brass sheet that I had had fitted in Lisbon to protect the mast from the chafing of the gaff, and I spent long hours up the mast carrying out this delicate repair.

During the careening, a young man who said he came from Tahiti begged me to take him across with us. At Vigo and La Luz I had had similar requests from men who wished to go to South

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America or to Panama. Some of them had offered me money, but I could not consent to these propositions. In the Canaries, I had come across a case of a whole crew who were trying to get away in a schooner whose sails and rigging had been confiscated. They were men who were dissatisfied with their lot and who hoped to find better conditions elsewhere.

Kurun was now ready to depart. M. Guillet, the meteorological officer, had had our wireless set overhauled, and at the Club I had been able, in a most unexpected fashion, to fill certain gaps in my collection of charts. When Sadrin had abandoned *Ananda*, he had given his large collection of charts to the Club to be given to any navigator in need of them. I was allowed to help myself to some very useful material. In the nick of time, just before we sailed, I received an anchor with a calibrated chain that had been sent me from Paris. As we left, our friends did their best to spoil us. M. de Grise brought us a case of tinned pineapple, some tins of sugar and a demijohn of white rum. Our cellar was now well stocked, for the director of the firm of St. James had also insisted on giving us a small cask of old rum.

Our immediate objective, after Martinique, was Panama, the key to the Pacific Ocean. Crossing the Caribbean Sea does not set any particular problems. The trade winds are favourable most of the way, though towards the end of the trip we could expect some calms that might prove treacherous owing to certain strong eastward currents. I had known about these conditions for years, having read about the setbacks that sailing ships have suffered in these seas. At Fort de France, I had made yet another careful study of charts and currents, and the course I planned was not the shortest by the chart: it remained within a reasonable distance of the coast of South America and boldly aimed at making a landfall north of Point Manzanillo, since the powerful coastal current there runs towards the east. That, no doubt, was the reason why Alain Gerbault, having, during his second voyage, reached a point so near Manzanillo that he thought with luck he should make Colon the next day, was, while becalmed, carried so far east by the current that he did not arrive at Colon till twenty days later. Incidentally, Gerbault liked to parade his disdain of nautical documents and of the experience of others, an attitude that rarely proved profitable to him.

OFF TO PANAMA

My crossing of the Caribbean Sea, a distance of 1,200 miles, was, like the earlier stages of my voyage, without accident.

July 3rd. I was pleased at being able to set out at last—as it was, I was more than a fortnight late on my schedule—since the season of cyclones was approaching. It was more than time to make a start. After getting the pram on board and hauling taut the awning, we weighed anchor at 9.50 a.m. and set sail. No one saw us off, as we had kept very quiet about the time of our departure; we managed to slip away unnoticed, and with the greater ease because the packet steamer *Gascogne* was just making its noisy arrival. We soon rounded Fort St. Louis, and at 9.55 passed the buoy at the entrance of the careening channel.

There was a fine breeze, and our stem cut a diamond spray, scattering thousands of small flying fish before us. In the brilliant sunlight, Fort de France Bay was at its best; keeping *Kurun* well on her course, heading for the open sea, I admired the view for the last time. We met several fast canoes, and the island, dominated by the peaks of Le Carbet and Mont Pelé, now veiled by clouds, soon dwindled on the horizon.

At 2.21 p.m., a slight accident occurred. As the captain was pottering about on deck, his hat blew off. It was an old canvas affair without much shape or colour, but I was attached to it. Yet I hesitated to engage in big manoeuvres to recover it and I let it sink. To sink in the Caribbean was perhaps not the most ignoble fate that old hat could meet. I went below and unpacked my reserve hat—same model, but new.

Later that afternoon, after having taken in all sail, I hoisted the twin staysails and arranged the automatic steering. *Kurun* was to cross the Caribbean Sea, a run of about 1,200 miles, without a helmsman and so without fatigue to anyone. As there was always a possibility of meeting other vessels in this sea, though, I insisted on a watch being kept at night. Farge, who had not been in too good health when we left Martinique, was improving steadily.

As we got further away from land, the sky grew noticeably less cloudy. We met some ships and saw a few aeroplanes. The nights were fine and clear. On July 4th, early in the afternoon, in the excitement caused by some whales playing near our boat, I lost my hat again and this time it was a new hat so that I was not

CROSSING THE CARIBBEAN

so philosophic about it. Fortunately, Farge managed to fish it up with the mop.

On the morning of the 5th we rigged up an awning over the stern reaching right up to the cabin hatch and made of an old tarpaulin which had come from a tunny-fisher, thus providing ourselves with a tent that transformed our voyage into an enviable holiday. To have meals in the shade while contemplating the sea is a rare pleasure. Our first meal under these conditions consisted of fried eggs, potatoes in their jackets, Dutch cheese, oranges, bread and butter, and water poured from a Spanish earthenware jar, suspended from the awning and kept cool with damp rags.

That day, the colour of the sea changed to an olive green.

July 6th. A school of tunny-fish swam ahead of us all the morning. Tropic-birds added colour to the scene and from our sides flying fish leaped in all directions. We failed to catch any fish. Early in the afternoon, the sea turned blue again.

July 8th. During my night watch, a bird came and perched on the boom. In the morning, I saw bonitoes leaping out of the water; I rigged a line but in vain. That night, the sky became overcast and the weather turned oppressive; the sunset had an ominous look. I served punch to raise our morale. At 10 p.m., I altered course. We had passed within seventy-five miles north of Point Gallinas, the northern extremity of La Coajira Peninsula in Colombia, and we were now following a course parallel with the current that runs from Point Manzanillo to Point Gallinas, but at a respectful distance from it. There were distant thunderstorms, from south-east to north-east. On each of the following nights, we were to see lightning.

July 9th. This day being a Sunday, we took greater care over our dress. We shaved and tidied ourselves. Punch as an aperitif. Tropical grapes, a kind of bladderwrack, was floating in patches on the water.

July 10th. All through the day we encountered masses of floating grasses and driftwood. The colour of the sea continually alternated between blue and green. Farge, on watch that night, picked up a 'flying fish with a double set of fins, of a very odd appearance', that came sailing into the cabin, and threw it back into the sea.

July 11th. A long swell from the north-east, considerably

IN THE DOLDRUMS

stronger than on previous days. The weather was thundery; a great deal of vegetable refuse was floating on the sea.

On the 12th and 13th, the breeze eased progressively. Squalls began to occur, bringing rain. Amid a profusion of sea-weed and vegetable refuse, we reached the limit of the trades. After having run so well for so long, the boat now became sluggish.

A calculation by the stars, on the 13th at 7.20 p.m., placed me thirty-three miles N. $\frac{1}{4}$ N.E. of Manzanillo lighthouse (Manzanillo is twenty-six miles N.E. $\frac{1}{4}$ E. of Colon). At midnight, by climbing the mast, I could discern a gleam in the clouds. Was it Manzanillo? I was to see that gleam four nights running.

The calm was followed by thunderstorms, squalls and rain, and on the 14th, at 11.25 a.m., I reverted to our ordinary sails. At 11.45 a.m., I thought I could see land far on the port side but couldn't be sure. At 12.05, my companion definitely could.

Until we reached Colon, we were for several days in that disagreeable region known to all sailing vessels as the doldrums, experiencing its variable breezes, interspersed with calms, squalls, rain and occasional violent and impressive thunderstorms, conditions that compel one to engage in constant manoeuvres to take advantage of what wind there happens to be; in other words, setting sail, taking it in, setting it, reefing it, *ad infinitum*, and all in a swell that is very wearing to the rigging. At times, the gaff was swinging from side to side. One night it came right off the mast after breaking its parrel and I had to take in the mainsail to put it right.

I had to manoeuvre to the utmost to gain a few miserable miles against the current. Our positions on subsequent evenings speak for themselves:

July 14th, 8 p.m.: 34 miles to the N. 25 W. of Manzanillo.

July 15th, 8 p.m.: 31 miles to the N. 45 W. of Manzanillo.

July 16th, 8 p.m.: 23.5 miles to the N. 57 W. of Manzanillo.

I avoided going closer inshore in order to keep clear of the current which would merely have carried us further back.

On July 17th, we were in luck. During the first eleven hours after midnight we covered almost nineteen miles by the log. Towards midday, as I was resting in my bunk, Farge perceived some white shapes in our wake and called me. At first, I thought

CROSSING THE CARIBBEAN

they were small sharks of about 2 ft. 4 in., and I prepared my fearsome cylindrical harpoon with its sharp steel prongs. The swell caused me to lose my balance and I gave myself a severe wound in the foot. It bled a lot and I had to sit down, feeling as if I were about to faint. Farge, experienced in first aid, put on a splendid bandage, but by the time it was adjusted my temper needed assuaging. I picked up my harpoon and scared one of the fish that had come nearer, attracted by a piece of bloodstained cotton-wool. It was a remora, a sucking-fish; I had never seen one before and was glad to have an opportunity of examining it closely, especially the sucker it has on the top of its head which enables it to attach itself to a shark. It is said that natives, in certain regions, catch them alive and use them at the end of a line to snare turtles. The remora is supposed to find the turtle and fasten on to its shell, so that all that has to be done is haul in the catch. That sort of fishing would suit me.

At 1.10 p.m., I made a curious observation. The speed of the boat was poor, and I saw the rotator of the log at first ahead of us and then abeam, so that there must have been in that current a different speed at the surface compared with that below the surface. Later, I wrote a note on this phenomenon and sent it to the American Hydrographic Service, who were very pleased to have the data.

In the afternoon, as I was resting, Farge began to pray in all seriousness for a favourable wind. It worked. Miraculously, a very light breeze rose, dropped for a few moments, and then freshened as the sky cleared in the north-east. I would not have dared disturb the Almighty for so small a matter; I preferred calling on Aeolus, the god of the winds. But there was the breeze and *Kurun* made good use of it. During the night I had to take two rolls in the mainsail, so much had the breeze freshened. We were making excellent headway and I kept heading straight for Colon. At 8 p.m., *Kurun* was twenty-two miles S. 72 W. of Manzanillo, and this time she could afford to laugh at the current, making for the harbour in fine style.

Gradually the lights of the harbour and of the town became clearer, and at 10.40 p.m. *Kurun* was in the harbour entrance. I had on board a detailed chart of this stretch which I had received from the Hydrographic Service, but across it was stamped 'Out of

THE NATIVES ARE UNFRIENDLY

date: dangerous for navigation'. It proved useful enough, however, as it was, for entering the harbour presented no difficulties.

I had intended remaining at anchor at some distance from the town until daylight came; there I was, my mind far from the anxieties besetting civilization, unaware that I had entered a military road and that the world was again entering on warfare—in Korea, this time. Hardly had we entered the peaceful waters of the bay before we were held in the beam of a signalling lamp that dimmed our navigation lights and threw our sails and rigging into sharp relief.

We had no practical knowledge of Morse signalling so that we could not reply to the frantic signalling directed at us. And the signaller was plainly losing his temper rapidly. I decided to make straight for the place from which the signals were coming and as we approached we were caught in the blinding beam of a searchlight from a warship.

I took in sail to parley. A large launch came up and we showed our flag and shouted some details about ourselves to the very suspicious investigators who were at an utter loss to understand how so small a craft as ours, and flying the French flag, could dare come and invade their roads. They were clearly not impressed by my explanations.

After a long palaver I obtained permission to anchor for the night. The crew of the launch tried again and again to board us, and very clumsy they were about it. The boat suffered and two forward stanchions were bent. I was not too happy at the proximity of these excited men, with their cowboy pistols stuck in their holsters. I declined a tow, and we were thereupon escorted to our anchorage. As there was very little wind, our progress was slow, which aroused these impatient people to fury. In the end, I accepted the tow, to please them rather than to please myself. I realized gradually that they were well-meaning in spite of the reception they had given us, for they assisted us without putting on excessive speed.

At 12.15 a.m., I anchored at the entrance of the French Canal, south of the town of Cristobal.

CHAPTER VIII

PANAMA

We had a good night's sleep and did not get up until late the following morning, and then only because two launches, each about twice the size of our boat, called on us, emitting a number of important officials who streamed on to our deck. To what company did we belong? they asked. What was the name of our agent ashore?

I explained that I belonged to no company and had no agent ashore, that I was the owner-master of *Kurun*, dependent on no one. To be dependent on no one seemed heinous in their eyes. Who then could be held responsible for my ship?

'I wonder,' I replied.

But that was only the beginning. 'Have you any money?'

My 'No' had a poor reception. Who, then, was going to pay for me? To go ashore in my own craft was forbidden. If I insisted on going ashore, I could hire one of their launches; that would be seven dollars an hour. Among what kind of people had we fallen? I knew that the U.S.A. was the land of the almighty dollar, but I had not imagined its hospitality would take quite this form. Had I not gone to sea to escape this kind of thing?

After they had been hanging about the cabin for some time, it dawned on the authorities that perhaps *Kurun* was not in the same class as the 20,000 tonners they were used to dealing with. One of them mentioned Harry Pidgeon whom he had known and then they started measuring the boat, for the rates for the Panama Canal are based on tonnage. I had to sign a number of documents.

After lunch we went ashore in the pram. Limping, a sandal tied on my bandaged foot, I called on the harbour master, who received me amicably and did not ask to see a single paper. We then went to the offices of the French Line to have a word with its director, M. Gringoire, who also acts as French Consul. He had been informed of our impending arrival by the people of Fort de

THE GOLDEN BOOK

France and gave us a warm reception, helping us with every detail throughout our stay. Owing to his intervention, difficulties melted away.

We made contact with the Yacht Club and I decided to take our boat round to their landing stage that very evening. I did so and shortly afterwards a polite official came on board and solemnly put seals on our cask of rum—as if we had intended wasting it during a stay in harbour. The next day, the Club presented us with a bill for a dollar and a half for the use of their landing stage. As the exchequer did not allow of such luxuries, I forthwith moved the boat a short distance away; it was easy enough to go ashore in our pram.

The organization of these American clubs is excellent, and we were invited to make the fullest use of available facilities, but we were warned on no account to admit a coloured person on board our ship or to bring one within the Club precincts.

Sharks and barracudas were swimming freely in the waters round the club-house; sea-mews and brown pelicans circled overhead, and in the evenings parrakeets gathered in large flocks to settle for the night in the palm trees on the shore.

The Club provided for a number of yachts, the owners of which lived nearby. They were mainly motor yachts, some of them large; there were few sailing craft, but I noticed one ketch, like *Malaba XIV* of the well-known architect John Alden. The waters of the Caribbean abound in fish, and the Americans like to go fishing there; they are particularly fond of fishing for tarpon, a big fish with large silvery scales, for each capture means a tough and exciting fight.

Americans are great cruising people and many yachts go on cruises of thousands of miles; the Panama Canal is frequently used by North American yachts. During my short stay, I saw at least half a dozen schooners or ketches. Apart from these, there are the yachts cruising round the West Indies and Central America which occasionally call at Panama.

In the Golden Book of the Yacht Club, I read the names of the navigators who have sailed through the Panama Canal; nearly all the famous ones have done so. The best known of them is perhaps Harry Pidgeon who sailed twice round the world, and it was a thrill to me to see the neat if slightly shaky handwriting of the

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famous sailor under a photographer of *Islander* taken on the occasion of his third visit on April 6th, 1941.

Among the names of the sailing vessels, I read *Rêverie*, an eight-ton cutter in which the Rev. John Antle left Falmouth for Victoria, British Columbia; the magnificent Norwegian ketch *Kathleen*, from Australia, that sailed round the world; *Stornoway*, a Norwegian cutter in which Alfred Peterson, the Brooklyn single-handed sailor, was circumnavigating the world at about the same time as *Kurun*; and *Stortbecker III*, the old yawl of Captain Slimbach.

I was pleased to note the passage of the small *Polaris*, the boat I had seen at Lisbon and which, bound for San Francisco, had arrived in America a few days before *Kurun*. The French were not much to the fore in the long list of yachts that had used the Canal: Alain Gerbault was the only one to be mentioned to me.

At each end of the Canal there is a double city: Cristobal-Colon on the Caribbean, Balboa-Panama on the Pacific: of each pair, the first is American, the second Spanish.

The Canal Zone is a strip some six miles wide, extending on both sides of the Canal, forming a curious enclave in the Republic of Panama. The whole region bears the traces of the most frenzied unleashing of cupidity that history has known. The first conquistadors named the isthmus 'Castello de Oro'; and the thirst for gold brought a wave of adventurers to its coast to conquer the empire of the Incas and seize its treasures.

Mule caravans, staggering under the prodigious loot of the Spanish Indies, took it to the Fleet of the Mainland at Nombre de Dios or Portobello; the Fleet returned to Europe with the treasure to lay it at his Catholic Majesty's feet. Conquerors, brigands, pirates and adventurers succeeded one another in this isthmus, all in different guises but actuated by one and the same motive.

The four cities have little specific character. The population is picturesque. Panama is one of the world's crossroads where Chinese, Indians and negroes live cheek by jowl with the whites. It is entertaining to watch the hackles of North and South Americans rise when they meet; the former despise the latter who heartily reciprocate the animosity of the 'gringoes'. They are actually all caricatures of the two tendencies prevailing in Europe, their common fatherland. The U.S.A. represent the far West, the vanguard of materialistic civilization, while the others display yet

OLD PANAMA

more clearly the signs of corruption and exploitation of man by man.

One of our excursions took us to the old fort of San Lorenzo, built in 1575, now in ruins beneath a luxuriant vegetation on a picturesque site overlooking the sea and the mouth of the river Chagres. Set in the virgin forest, it calls to the spectator's mind the bloody battles waged by Morgan, the buccaneer, to conquer the land in 1671. San Lorenzo is a favourite place for sightseers; the Americans especially desire to have a look at 'the oldest fort under the United States flag'. Piles of old cannon balls still lie about, and I was told that, in spite of their weight, their numbers are decreasing owing to the muscular activities of souvenir hunters. I confess that I was not tempted to add to the ballast of *Kurun* by such means.

A visit to old Panama on the other side of the isthmus was a little disappointing. There are some ruins near the modern city but they lack the interest of historical associations.

All that is left of the ancient city—a remarkable place if the old descriptions of palaces, churches and cathedral with their rich ornamentation are to be believed—are a few stones which put a considerable strain on the imagination. The atmosphere is one of coca-cola vendors, chickens, dogs, pigeons and policemen, with vultures disdainfully circling aloft. The wide seashore, flat and deserted, is the hunting ground of curlews and other waders. Flocks of cormorants stand out in relief against the Pacific Ocean. In the ruins of the cathedral grow an abundance of cacti; visitors have yielded to the curious impulse of writing their names on the stems and leaves of the graffiti, plants which are thus a painful record of human stupidity.

Though my ears find it difficult to grow accustomed to the basic words of the American language: *money, business, job, efficiency, production*, *Kurun* had to spend two months in the isthmus. We were soon on good terms with a charming young English couple, the Hepworths, who live on board their *Arthur Rogers*, a former 70-foot Brixham trawler rigged as an ordinary ketch. They had left England three years before on a world cruise, but they had had trouble with their crew, *Arthur Rogers* being a heavy boat and needing a fairly large crew. After a stay in British Guiana and New Orleans, she now lay in the fresh-water Gatun Lake, and

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there we had the pleasure of going on board her. Our friends were seeking ways and means of continuing their trip to New Zealand and Australia. Such cruises are often abortive, for differences of opinion are almost bound to arise between the organizers who know so well what should be done and their often haphazard crew who cling to the views of the inexperienced.

Another instance of this was the magnificent cutter *Viking* (48 ft. 9 in. by 15 ft. 6 in.), that lay dismally abandoned within a few cables of *Arthur Rogers*. I had a close look at this masterpiece of naval architecture, designed by Colin Archer. *Viking* had left the English port of Dartmouth under A. D. Marshall on a world cruise, planned before the war. She got as far as Cristobal via Madeira, but the difficulties Marshall had with his crew—and he was no longer a young man—made him jettison his plans and return to England, leaving his ship behind. *Viking*, her fine, savage-looking figurhead painted red, was now rotting in Gatun Lake. Everything on board was still in place, but the warm humidity of the tropics had done its deadly work. She presented a spectacle so pitiful that it hurt my sailor's soul.

Owing to the kindness of Commander Bertschy, the military chief of the Canal Zone, *Kurun* received many welcome attentions. For instance, I was able to lay hands on precious and un procurable material—metal blocks and stainless steel wire for changing the lifelines.

During our stay, several French ships called at Colon, and the crew of *Kurun* were cordially received on board the *Valognes* by her master, M. Clouteau, who presented me with an extremely practical star-finder, and on board the *Indochinois*, whose master, M. Lagrée, I had met before.

We were also invited to lunch by the master of the packet-steamer *Ville d'Amiens*, and this visit led to serious altercations with the authorities. To cover the few hundred yards of American water between the two craft, I used *Kurun*'s pram without giving the matter a moment's thought. Hardly had I set foot aboard the packet-steamer before the American customs officials arrived in pursuit. There was a fearful to-do; I had apparently infringed a whole series of regulations. Sailing in the French Canal was forbidden (later I learnt that the sixty feet which I rowed in my pram to and fro between *Kurun* and the Club premises had been 'on

THE TRIALS OF CIVILIZATION

tolerance'); going to the coaling station was forbidden; going aboard any ship whatever was forbidden, etc., etc. I was, therefore, liable to a series of fines and penalties. I was threatened with the confiscation of my boat, and was on the point of losing my temper completely when, by one of those curious changes of mood, the customs officials became more amiable and decided to forgive me for this once.

On leaving the *Ville d'Amiens*, I found that my pram had been moved a considerable distance from where I had left it. The moving had been done by a hefty launch; the pram was in a shocking state, smothered in fuel oil and coal tar; a rowlock had been broken—a feat that takes some doing—and the hull had been generally damaged. I shall not go into my feelings here, but I revealed them in strong terms to a uniformed American on the spot. He maintained a masterly silence. After a long search, I recovered the oars and we made our way back to *Kurun*. I reflected that life among civilized people is singularly difficult, and I found nothing to modify that disquieting opinion during my whole stay in the Canal Zone.

We did not remain inactive at Colon. After mature deliberation, I had decided to shorten the gaff and in consequence to modify the mainsail. The long gaff, the peak halyard of which did not work too well on account of the mast being rather short, was putting too much strain on the rigging. The copper plate which I had had put round the mast at Martinique had been torn away in a heavy swell. I took one of my two mainsails to a sail-maker to have it altered; this was the mainsail I had had made at Paimpol—I called it 'my Paimpolaise'—and, as it had not been too well cut, I had kept it in reserve until now. The other one, called 'Alexandrine' as a souvenir of my friend Alexandre Marquer, the sailmaker at Le Croisic, I kept as it was. And so, one day, I took my saw and cut one of my gaffs down to 14 ft. 2 in. I was able, by using my plane, to take a little more weight off the end without decreasing its strength. This, amounting to a permanent reef in the mainsail, proved very beneficial. It gave better balance, especially when sailing with the helm lashed. But the work cost forty-five dollars, which made a large hole in our reserves.

When the sail was ready, I tanned it a bright red; I had not been able to get the ochre colour I wanted and had followed a

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recipe given me by the Chinese Wong Chang; it proved highly successful—the sail never ran nor did the colour fade.

The awning we rubbed with a canvas preservative, which made it look very fine but which I now suspect caused it to rot prematurely.

Crossing the isthmus was in itself comparable to a complete stage of the voyage, and by no means the easiest. So far, *Kurun* had depended entirely on the will of her captain—and that of the gods of the sea—but on this stretch she was to be at the mercy of the will of a good many other people and their machines.

A sailing boat without an auxiliary engine: for that there was only one solution—she must be towed. Given time, I am convinced that we could have made the crossing with the means at our disposal. Erling Tambs, for one, had gone part of the way under sail in his *Teddy*, and I was told that Harry Pidgeon had rowed his *Islander* from end to end, a story that I was not altogether prepared to swallow. But my informant had added, ‘I doubt whether the Americans will let you do any yachting in their canal.’

The towing problem was not easy of solution, especially as I hadn’t much money to spend. In the land of the dollar *Kurun* did not rank very high in the scale. I had to find a small ship, not too fast, to tow us, and, having found her, to persuade the authorities to agree to the transaction. M. Gringoire had at once thought of the banana boats, small coasters that make trips of hundreds of miles from one harbour in Central or South America to another and frequently use the Canal. I opened negotiations first with a Greek, then with an Italian, but with no success. It seemed that there was some regulation that decreed that only the official canal tugs could be hired. I was handed the official tariff. It was astronomical, useless even to think of it.

At last, on August 19th, the amazing M. Gringoire told me that my problem was solved. ‘You are leaving early tomorrow morning and you will be towed by the *Baracoa*.’

I was very anxious concerning this trip. Towing is always a chancy business in which any oversight on anyone’s part may lead to untold damage and I had seen the gigantic locks of Gatun at work, an impressive sight. But as I had watched the speed with which the locks filled, and the resultant turmoil of waters, I had

A TOW IS ARRANGED

felt uneasy at the thought of my small *Kurun* being subjected to such forces. For large vessels, there is not the slightest risk; they are immobilized by powerful electric mules, but a small boat can so easily be crushed.

I went and had a look at the *Baracoa*: a wooden vessel of a hundred feet in length, flying the Ecuadorian flag; a poorly maintained boat. We could be towed only abreast of each other, and I wondered about the shape of her hull. Upon inspection, her sides proved satisfactory, straight and vertical, right from the bows, with no ridges or other dangerous protuberances.

I enquired about her speed: seven to eight knots. That was fast, but on the other hand we could use only the hours of daylight, so that a certain speed was essential to ensure covering the forty-four miles of the canal.

Sunday, August 20th. We rose at 4.45 a.m., for the *Baracoa* was to be the first to enter the Canal and we had been advised to be ready by 6 a.m. Traffic was remarkably well organized; ships had been given their turns according to their characteristics. The weather was beautiful, which was fortunate, for almost every day since we had arrived at Colon there had been rain, and none of our Breton drizzle!

Our 'tug' did not come to collect us before 9.15 a.m. I admired the skill of the pilot as he brought his ship to a dead stop within a few feet of the cutter, though admittedly he was assisted by the absence of wind and tide. Americans, however, have no patience once they are handling machinery. Hardly had we got a line across before the pilot was on his way without the cutter being either made fast or properly drawn alongside. The result was that *Kurun* was violently thrown against the *Baracoa* and the gooseneck of my bowsprit was twisted as if it were made of tinsel. I was horror-struck. If this were a foretaste, what state was poor *Kurun* going to be in when she reached the other end? But the pilot stopped and gave us a chance to haul up alongside properly. I made everything fast and we were soon out of the French Canal, and by 10 a.m. we were at the first lock-gates of Gatun.

The lock is an enormous structure, more than a mile in length, allowing ships to pass from Gatun Lake to the sea in three stages. There are two parallel sets of locks so that ships can pass in opposite directions simultaneously. Each of the lock chambers is a thousand

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feet long and a hundred and ten feet wide and is provided with a set of safety gates. About eighty feet distant from the entrance is the famous chain that, it is said, brings a ship of ten thousand tons going at a speed of four knots to a stop within seventy-five feet.

To pass through the locks, the ships are manoeuvred and towed by mules, electrical appliances of considerable power mounted on cog tracks and providing extremely strong traction and support. They manoeuvre the largest ships with remarkable ease. Everything to do with the Canal is excellently well organized, and the trained staff go about their work with calm precision, and in silence. A considerable number of negroes are employed in the pilotage work.

The *Baracoa*, being a small craft, was not entitled to make use of the mules. Small ships enter the locks at the same time as a large one and simply moor along one side of the lock. That was why I had seen yachts at the Cristobal Yacht Club preparing themselves for passing through the Canal by taking down their crosstrees in order to avoid damage.

And now, after the fender chain had been removed, we entered the lock along with a large ship. The lock gates were barely closed before the water began to rise in boiling whirlpools: the boats began to sheer (except the large ones which were held in their places by four mules), the ropes to strain, and I feared that they might part, but before long the high sides of the lock looked less threatening and the water grew calmer. It was a curious sensation to be rising above the level of the sea which could still be seen astern.

In the second lock, the *Baracoa* made a false move, due to inattention, and there we were making straight for the side. I was already hearing the planks smash in imagination—to get so far and then end miserably in the midst of machinery! But the pilot manoeuvred with remarkable skill, and from a speed of several knots we stopped dead within a foot of the wall—with so little room to spare that I should not have liked to be in between ship and side. The pilot told me that returning from the Pacific, after Gatun Lake, is much simpler as the water of the locks is less turbulent.

And that brought us to our third lock. Less than eight miles

GATUN LAKE

astern lay the Caribbean, the Atlantic, Europe. I felt as if I were moving into another world.

At 10.23 a.m. the lock gates opened on to the lake. On our way! We passed the Yacht Club of Gatun and I cast a last sad glance at *Arthur Rogers* and *Viking*.

I had had opportunities during some of our excursions of admiring this magnificent lake; I had even swum in its deep and limpid waters. In close proximity was the jungle in which roamed pumas, peccarys and monkeys among a bright green vegetation interspersed with red rocks and cliffs; beyond lay blunt-topped mountains. It had taken four years to fill this artificial lake, covering an enormous area, a fact that made one realize what a catastrophe it would be if its dam broke. The Americans remain vigilant.

We passed Tiger and Lion islands, basking places for crocodiles like all the others in this island-strewn inland sea.

The ships, going at full speed, agitated the water, and *Kurun* was roughly thrown against the side of the *Baracoa*. We had by now struck up a friendship with the captain of the tug, who was a charming man, and with the pilot, who was a capital seaman. We chatted with them, without taking our eye off the warps, and keeping a sharp watch on any ship that came near us.

The sun glared down on us, making my head ache in spite of the protection of a hat. I did not feel well and was looking forward to our arrival at Balboa; once there, I could climb into my bunk.

A warship carrying troops to the Pacific overtook us, though this was forbidden by the regulations; she was made to resume her place behind us at Pedro Miguel.

To starboard, we passed the island of Barro Colorado (red loam), famous for its station at which specialists study animal life in its primitive setting. Here, at one time, the Rio Chagres ran; the waters have now swallowed the region past which many a warlike expedition came. The houses have vanished, though a few tree-tops still emerge. The red buoys of the channel stood out against their green background and on them cormorants rested while they digested.

At last, we came to the end of the lake. The channel was narrowing. We arrived at Gamboa and its installations, the meeting place of the Chagres and the Canal, then at the famous Culebra. The

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hand of man had cut the mountain-side in half to allow the passage of the canal, a herculean labour. A large bronze plaque commemorates this enterprise, which cost the lives of thousands of workers in this murderous climate.

We came to Pedro Miguel with its single lock, passing through it without difficulty in twenty-five minutes. I was glad to observe that the descent from the lake was much smoother than the ascent. It did not take us long to reach the locks of Miraflores, through both of which we passed in less than an hour—fifty-three minutes, to be exact. At 5 p.m., the waters before our bows were open; here the appearance of the canal banks revealed tidal action, and soon I saw the sea—the Pacific Ocean. This was a sight for which I had longed for many years. Vasco Nuñez de Balboa, the first European to behold the Pacific, could hardly have felt more enraptured than *I*.

I was running a temperature, but all the same I was able to rejoice at being here, in my own small cutter which had come all the way from France under her own power.

We were rapidly approaching Balboa. As the *Baracoa* was on her way to Ecuador and was not stopping, I asked the pilot to cast me off as near as he could to the Club. With civil attention, a launch of the Canal Authorities stood by to take *Kurun* in tow.

A large number of vessels were anchored in the sheet of water by the Balboa Yacht Club; I had not expected to see so many. Some were sailing yachts, the hulls and rigging of which I inspected: first, a large Norwegian ketch from which a large blonde woman greeted us. Another I recognized as the schooner *Flying Fish*, which we had encountered at Colon; her crew waved to us.

It was Sunday, and there was a great deal of activity. Some of the yachts had been out fishing. About 5.30 p.m., I slipped the *Baracoa*'s tow ropes and the launch took us in tow near the end of the jetty. *Kurun* has never been handled so awkwardly; I was not in charge of the manoeuvre.

I grew a little impatient with the vacillation of the Club manager in allocating us an anchorage; there we were, going the rounds, towed by a launch piloted by a negro whose frame was splendidly athletic but whose face was bestial. At the helm stood the manager trying to make up his mind while we kept on nearly running into other yachts. North, south, east, west—.

BIG GAME FISHING

My temperature continued to rise and so did my temper. I told the manager he had better cast off, but he had been blessed with a sudden inspiration. Again we passed right through the anchorage, heading for a large rusty buoy at the south-eastern extremity. We made straight for it at considerable speed; I slipped the tow rope to prevent us from crashing and by brute force I fended it off *Kurun* with the boat-hook. Thanks all the same! The manager departed, warning us against a current of five knots.

All I wanted was to lie down. I tidied one or two things on deck and went below for forty-eight hours. All that first night, the buoy banged against the side of the hull and my sailor's eyes refused to close. In the end, I had to get up and scull away from that buoy to some other anchorage.

The Balboa Yacht Club is much used by yachts, mainly large motor launches, some of them very luxurious. The owners go in for fishing; the Gulf of Panama and the bay abound in a variety of fish: barracuda, tunny, dorado. Sportsmen fish for the sail-fish, a remarkable fighter of whose capture a man can rightly be proud; it resembles the marlin except for the high dorsal fin which looks like a sail; it grows up to thirteen feet six inches long and belongs to the *istiophori*. Off the Pearl Islands, giant rays—the extra-ordinary *manta birostris*—are caught, some twenty feet long and more.

At the Sail Fish Club of Balboa, where trophies are exhibited, I saw the head of a black marlin, a *tetrapturus mazara*, a powerful and very fast swimmer that resembles the sword fish, a *xiphias*, though it does not belong to the same family. The fish to which the head had belonged had weighed a thousand and six pounds and had been caught with a rod, which for some time constituted a world record.

I have watched, with a certain amusement, the way in which these modern fishing launches prepare for a trip: the negroes taking case after case of equipment and provisions on board, not forgetting the ice and the indispensable crates of coca-cola. To see the crew come aboard is no less fascinating than watching the stowing of their equipment: their small multicoloured caps with long peaks are worth waiting for in themselves.

Many people, young boys especially, fish from the shore. On the Club landing stage is a notice: 'It is strictly forbidden to catch sharks from the jetty.'

PANAMA

Much more attractive to me than the gleaming motor boats, however, were the sailing yachts. Some of these were magnificent craft. *Sagamore* with her cutwater had immediately caught my eye, and I was pleased when I had an opportunity to see her at close quarters. I even saw her out of the water. The plans for her building had been inspired by the famous *Spray* belonging to that amazing seaman Slocum. She looked grand in the water, yet she had nothing of which my small cutter could justifiably be envious.

Shortly after our arrival, the small ketch *Inca* made her appearance, returning from a cruise to the Galapagos. Her master was Captain Clinton Beverstock, a Canal pilot. It was from him that I gained some useful hints for the crossing and for a visit to the Galapagos which he knew well. He presented me with a chart of the principal anchorages of that archipelago.

The boat we most often visited, however, was *Langesund III*, a magnificent, sturdy, 67-ft. long Norwegian ketch, designed by Colin Archer and flying the Swedish flag. She was luxuriously equipped, and her owner, a wealthy and eccentric American, Mrs. L. L. S., lived alone on board. We exchanged pleasant visits throughout our stay. We called her 'the Princess', which, from a certain point of view, she was, having discarded a number of conventions in order to live a simple and, as she believed, a true life.

'I hate those respectable types,' she used to say, 'they are so stupid and narrow-minded.'

She had led a fairly exciting life, spoke several languages perfectly, and knew the European capitals as well as she knew Tierra del Fuego. Her company, in her picturesque and motley setting, was never boring; at times she was, admittedly, a little noisy—she liked to hail passing ships through a mighty megaphone, but she was so accomplished a sailor that we could not find it in our hearts to hold that against her. She had, we learned, only just returned from a cruise to the Cocos Islands. The story of the prodigious treasure supposed to be hidden there is well known: some thousands of millions of dollars! Like dozens of other boats, *Langesund* had set out to seek the treasure, and, like them, had failed.

Apart from this, there was yet another treasure story connected with *Langesund*: a treasure concealed within her, no one knew

'THE PRINCESS'

where. During the war years, she belonged to a wealthy Dane who had made a fortune trading with the Germans. That fortune, in gold, precious stones and jewellery, he hid aboard his ketch; but he failed to make good his escape and his vessel was confiscated. No customs man, however, was ever able to find a trace of the hidden treasure, so that it was quite possible that a fortune lay somewhere within reach. Not that this worried 'the Princess'. She might go on a quest for treasure, but only for the fun of it.

Her life on board had its moments. On one occasion, we had to go to her aid. One of the crew, a rather subnormal fellow, had taken too much to drink and was threatening to kill her; she had locked herself in her cabin and the maniac was trying to bairn his way in. . . . He went overboard when he saw us but the sharks cannot have been very hungry that day.

We frequently visited the French Legation, where we were very cordially received by our Minister, M. Guy Menant.

Our days were indeed well filled, for we had to work on *Kurun* with an eye to the long crossings that lay before us. I mended the gooseneck, and, carrying out an old idea, fixed ratlines in the shrouds, which would enable my companion to climb the rigging. And for the third time I put some copper sheathing round the mast to protect it from the chafing of the gaff. The shorter gaff was to prove much better, causing considerably less wear.

Kurun may have been ready for the next part of the voyage, but the same could not be said of the crew. We hadn't a penny piece left. Farge had hoped to sell some photographs, but the French agency to which he had offered them rejected them as 'insufficiently dramatic'. Town dwellers demand action: drama, horrors, sensation. We had been fortunate enough to escape such things.

And there was another little point that was not improving matters. Farge had been talkative from the start, but the Atlantic had developed his powers of speech beyond all expectation. He had now reached the point of boasting of the most extraordinary achievements of both *Kurun* and himself. I was prepared to excuse a little fatuousness; my very silence may have encouraged him: he went from strength to strength. A parting of the ways was becoming inevitable. And there was another, more valid factor. His state of health, which was to cause me serious anxiety some months later, was not good enough to enable him to continue a voyage of

PANAMA

which he had experienced only the easier part. We decided to separate, and he went ashore. A few days later, I took him back, for there he was, stranded without resources in a land the language of which he did not know. I proposed to take him with me to Tahiti. There he would be on French territory and would be able to get in touch with his people. He agreed.

Before setting out, we still had to scrub the boat's bottom. At Cristobal and at Balboa, her bottom had become smothered in vegetation and barnacles. The underwater paint I had used had proved of little efficacy in warm water—this applies to all paint sold in France as anti-fouling. Fortunately, the Americans are masters in this matter and I had obtained an enormous tin of plastic paint, an amazing product which protects the hull against shell-fish in tropical waters.

In contrast with the Caribbean, Panama Bay has a fairly strong tidal action, which suited me very well when it came to scrubbing *Kurun*. I ran her aground at the other side of the Canal mouth at the far end of a charming little bay surrounded by trees. I very nearly sailed into one of them in running ashore at high water. On this spot, I was surrounded by intensive life, both in the water and on land. Game was plentiful. There were curlews, godwits, plovers and cormorants in flocks such as I had never seen in my life, brown pelicans that came to fish within fifty feet of the boat, egrets, herons, cranes and many more varieties, the names of which I did not know. They were pleasant, though distracting company in our laborious task which took us several tides.

Whole colonies of shell-fish had to be scraped away, especially from near the waterline. In fastening themselves so securely, they had penetrated several layers of paint, which meant that along the whole of the waterline I had to lay the wood bare. I inspected it closely, but, thank God, found no trace of worm; the oak was magnificent, quite intact, due no doubt to the precautions I had taken at the outset: three successive applications of carbonyl, each left to be slowly absorbed by the wood, followed by two applications of boiling tar. Now I once more gave the stripped oak a coating of tar along the waterline, and only then put on the plastic paint. To finish the job, we carefully gave the waterline a second coat of plastic.

On September 17th, at daybreak, we sculled out of the small

READY TO LEAVE

bay, my companion rowing the pram. We left the charming setting with reluctance, but we were not sorry to leave its mosquitoes.

Kurun was almost ready for crossing the Pacific. We bought most of our stores at the Commissary, a vast emporium appertaining to the Canal which allowed shipping particularly advantageous terms. The Commissary is as large as a village and its enormous stores include practically everything. Both at the Cristobal and at the Balboa departments, anything can be bought, from a tooth-brush to a barrel of tar, via a hammer and a packet of cigarettes. The galley was well stocked with food guaranteed to keep a long time.

The Hydrographic Office supplied me with several nautical documents; at the very last minute, I received a pre-publication copy of the nautical *Ephémérides* for 1952 from the Paris Bureau des Longitudes, a very kind gesture which provided me with an invaluable aid when at sea. All that now remained to be done was to take on board our store of fresh water and ship the last fresh victuals—and make our peace with the various authorities. The last task was not the easiest.

CHAPTER IX

FROM PANAMA TO THE GALAPAGOS

THE Galapagos Islands were to be my first port of call on the long crossing of the Pacific Ocean. This archipelago, situated about nine hundred miles from Panama, is a possession of the Republic of Ecuador. It might be thought that a 30-ft. yacht could call at a group of islands lost in an immensity of sea without any particular formalities. Nothing of the sort. For several days, assisted by the helpful Mme. de Raulin, daughter of the French Minister, who kindly acted as my interpreter, I badgered the Ecuadorian Consul at Panama. To pay dues to be allowed to anchor in a practically uninhabited archipelago would not only have been disastrous for my depleted finances but was such arrant nonsense in any circumstances that I did my utmost to avoid having to pay.

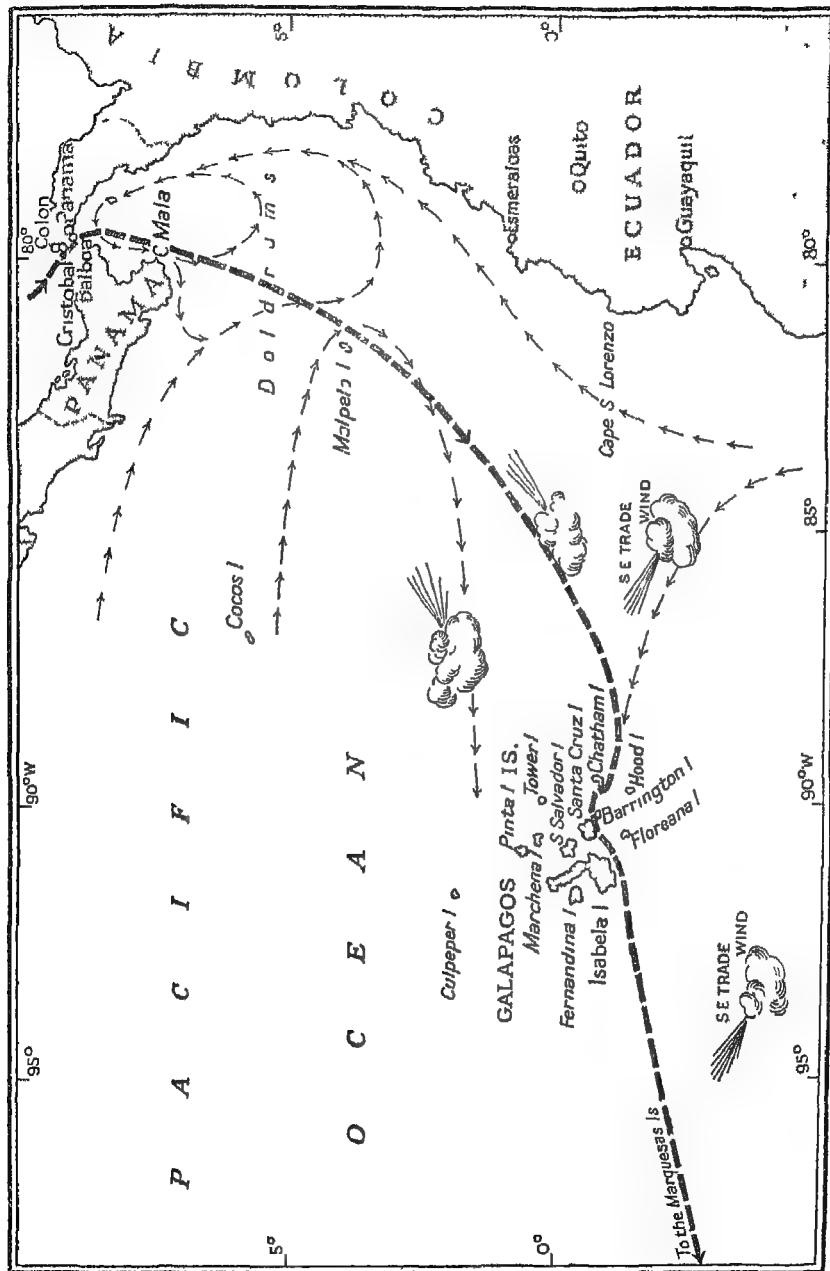
The French representative himself interceded on my behalf with the Ambassador, but to no avail. Pay or run the risk of having the boat confiscated in the Galapagos. The trouble was that I had not got enough dollars left to pay the ransom they demanded even if I had wished to do so.

In the end, the French Minister was generous enough to pay the sum out of his own pocket. And even then I had not finished with administrative pettifogging. I must have a pilot and pay twenty-one dollars. I was furious and was just working out ways and means of clinching the matter with the aid of a fine breeze and the mainsheet when I was called to the telephone and found that I had yet another benefactor.

'Captain Beverstock is seeing to everything for you and you won't have to pay anything after all.'

'O.K.! Thank you! Good-bye!'

Monday September 25th. On this occasion, we were ready on time according to my schedule and, before anyone could think up anything else to delay us, we left, in possession of the documents given us by the Ecuadorian Consul and those issued by the Canal Zone Authorities, and a lot of similar junk. We were 'O.K.'



FROM PANAMA TO THE GALAPAGOS

The day before, the French Minister came to bid us goodbye, and we paid our last visit to *Langesund* in the evening. No one else had been invited. 'The Princess' was alone with Constantin, a charming young man of Russian origin; he had replaced the mad sailor who had so dramatically taken his departure a few days before. Though she could carry her drink, 'the Princess' had already had one too many. She went on pouring herself Scotch after Scotch and insisted that we take her on board *Kurun* as far as Tahiti. We had to leave early to get some sleep before our departure.

The next morning, just on 8 o'clock, M. Guy de la Porte, the French Consul, came to shake hands with us and to bring us some lemons as a precaution against scurvy and a bottle of rum as a precaution against everything. He brought a bottle of champagne as well. These were attentions not to be forgotten easily.

At 10.50 a.m., we set sail. The resplendent red of our Paimpolaise mainsail, not yet sullied by the elements, was a striking sight on the Club anchorage in the brilliant sunshine. We passed within feet of *Langesund*, from which 'the Princess' gave us a sonorous 'Bon Voyage'.

A light north-west breeze. Splendid sailing weather. I took the centre of the channel, running before the wind.

Inca of Captain Beverstock, having dealt with a little engine trouble, came to take us in tow. The channel buoys sped past. We passed Guinea Point to starboard, then the Palo Seco leper colony; on the port side, the islands of Naos, Perico, and Flamenco. The first waves we encountered came from an American cargo boat. We slipped the tow rope and exchanged farewells.

I set the staysail, but the wind had now shifted to the south-east and we moved gently along close-hauled on the port tack. By now we had left the glaucous waters of Balboa; the sea was sparkling and with joy I heard again the sweet murmur of water running past the hull. The immense ocean was offering itself to our bows.

Nevertheless, I was fully conscious of the difficulties of the Panama-Galapagos stretch. I had always thought of it as the most ticklish part of the entire voyage. From childhood, I had heard about the difficulties that beset the mariner in the doldrums of the Eastern Pacific. Many a time had I listened to the extraordinary sea story of the year 1923, hanging on the lips of the teller who was

THE FATE OF SUZAKY

the hero of the tale and my father's friend, Captain Desdemaines-Hugon.

He had left Rouen in the fore-and-aft rigged three-master, the *Suzaky*, a wooden sailing vessel without auxiliary engine. She was bound for Tahiti, where the master and others on board intended to settle. The crossing from Rouen to Colon was made without incident. The *Suzaky* left Balboa—on her last voyage, as it turned out. She never reached Tahiti, for she was unable to get out of the doldrums. For three months, three terrible months, the ship lay becalmed, paralysed. Borers reduced the hull to a sieve and she began to leak like an old basket. Night and day, the pumps had to be manned to keep her afloat. Rain fell in torrents, often accompanied by thunderstorms and squalls, but never did an honest wind blow to get the ship moving. Life on board—there were two women among the passengers—became sheer hell. The crew even tried to harness captured sharks to tow the ship—and there were plenty of sharks to choose from!

At last, after being becalmed for ninety-two days, the *Suzaky* was lucky enough to be sighted by an American vessel which towed her as far as Punta Arenas, a central American harbour, where she was beached on the sandy shore. So bad was her condition that she had to be condemned.

The *Suzaky*, however, was a fairly heavy ship; a small boat can use the slightest breeze. I had read stories of Gerbault's crossings—he took thirty-seven days to sail from Panama to the Galapagos in *Firecrest*, and forty-five in *Alain-Gerbault* on his second voyage across the Pacific.

Firecrest was narrow, deep in the water, fast, an excellent sailing vessel when close on a wind, with sails as light as those of his second boat. Both were copper-sheathed and ran no risk of borers getting to work, nor of the rapid growth of underwater vegetation in tropical regions.

Kirun was setting out under the best conditions that I had been able to provide, though this did not signify that they were the best to be desired. We had scrubbed and painted her as carefully as possible; we had laid in victuals and fresh water in quantities sufficient to last us for several months, but the rigging and the sails were not impeccable. For the first time since I had left France, I had set out with inadequate sail; my sails were heavy and some of

FROM PANAMA TO THE GALAPAGOS

were not cut as I would have liked for sailing close-hauled. This might prove a major handicap in crossing a region of calms, light breezes and continual head winds.

I had studied the charts over and over again. I knew all the difficulties that confronted me. At Panama, someone had said, 'To reach the Galapagos in a sailing vessel without an engine is an impossibility.' I had not allowed myself to be discouraged. In my opinion, *Kurun* would be able to get out of the doldrums, however unfavourable the circumstances.

Taking the whole route, the worst calms are met with near the start in the bay and the Gulf of Panama as far as Malpelo Island (about two hundred and thirty miles south-south-west of Cape Mala). After that, regular winds are encountered: a south-west monsoon, alternating with irregular periods of calm. At the same time, a study of the various currents had shown me that it is possible to benefit from a favourable vein between Panama and Malpelo, and that if I could keep in it, I should no doubt succeed in passing through the doldrums.

Alain Gerbault had not followed the best route, and for days on end had had to contend with some wellcharted currents, which he could easily have avoided had he not disdained the nautical experience of centuries—a curious trait in his character that is borne out in his writings.

Should the wind fail me, therefore, I hoped the current would take me to Malpelo; I was sure I should find enough wind to enable me to keep my boat in that favourable current and I had no forebodings that I should remain to moulder in the doldrums.

Kurun was sailing as close to the wind as possible and, to make better headway, I had not hardened my sheets too much. The Paimpol mainsail, now re-cut, was not fitting as the sail of a yacht should, but I was convinced that it would fill properly as soon as there was a breath of wind. The sea was dead calm and the boat, well down in the water, was not drifting off her course.

The weather was delightful. We saw the islands of Taboga, Taboguilla and Urava more and more clearly and they looked even more attractive than they had when I had admired them from the anchorage of the Balboa Yacht Club. I had toyed with the idea of mooring there for a time, but to do so I should have had to comply with so many regulations apart from employing a pilot

THE GULF OF PANAMA

that I had decided to leave them alone. Anyway, I was certain that there would be many other beautiful islands in the Pacific—and they might also have the advantage of being free from cowboys and coca-cola.

The breeze freed us and we were able to slip between Taboga and Taboguilla. Panama was flattening out on the horizon. Just as I was near enough to see the causeway that linked Taboguilla to a small island to the south-west of it, the breeze died away. As I had to follow what breeze there was, I passed to leeward of Taboga rather than go about, and was able to glimpse the fine beaches and luxuriant vegetation.

1.40 p.m. We were between the islands of Taboga and Melones, this last a more arid island with few trees.

1.55 p.m. The breeze suddenly shifted to the north-west. A heavy thunderstorm broke over the land, and the sea looked like molten lead—a lugubrious scene, but by now I was getting used to these tropical thunderstorms.

The wind freshened; the sea was covered with little white foam caps like children's playthings, but my mainsail was small. The wind was on the quarter and we were moving well—if only we could keep it up for at least a week.

I left the island of Chamé on the port hand and at 3.15 p.m. we were abeam of Valladolid Rock at three quarters of a mile distance. This rock forms a curious arch and is alive with birds; the sea was breaking gently against it.

3.30 p.m. The thunderstorm died away and the wind fell as it began to rain. We inaugurated the magnificent waterproofs bought at Panama to replace the oilskins which had disintegrated in the warm humidity of the tropics. But alas! they were like sieves and the thought that we had spent several dollars which we could ill spare on them was galling. On the other hand, I was cheered to see that not one red drop was dripping from the sail. The colour was fast and the recipe given us by our Chinese friend was all he had claimed it to be. As the rain poured down, I blessed the yellow face of that astute little man.

4.30 p.m. The wind rose again, this time blowing from the south-west, with a noticeable swell from the south. *Kurun* began to pitch heavily, the end of her jib boom dipping in the water. We were making no headway, but the current was bearing us south.

FROM PANAMA TO THE GALAPAGOS

September 26th. After a night of squalls, violent thunderstorms, downpours, calms and variable breezes, the islands of Bona and Otoque, by which we had passed fairly closely earlier in the night, were still clearly visible in the morning. We came across a large number of drifting trees.

Towards 11 a.m., the trailing fish line which I had put out with a view to lunch suddenly tautened. A fine fish was on the hook, a dorado, with a gorgeous blue and green iridescence. I drew it in as gently as possible, but it was a powerful swimmer and made for the starboard side. I gave it a little more line and succeeded in bringing it nearer the starboard quarter, but, before we could harpoon it, it tore the hook away and vanished. Farewell, lunch!

In the afternoon, in a flat calm, we saw some very large fish leaping out of the water—the sea is amazingly abundant in fish in this region. Before sunset, as we were again making headway in a light south-south-west wind, a small herd of whales appeared, some of which made remarkable curvets out of the water. It would have been fun chasing them.

September 27th. Wind from the north-north-west at 4.20, giving us a good speed; from the rigging, I could identify the lighthouse of Cape Mala to starboard. I steered towards it until the wind dropped.

The dawn was fine. By daylight, I could easily distinguish the small island of Iguana and the lighthouse of Cape Mala which looked like a huge white candle. The coast was sunlit and in the background rose the wild mountains of the Azuero peninsula.

At seven o'clock, *Kurun* was nine miles east of Cape Mala, but the swell from the south, which had returned that morning, grew stronger. We pitched heavily and the log barely span at all. The breeze played around and we drifted. Yet I was not dissatisfied; in two days, we had covered a hundred miles straight along our set course.

As we were enjoying a cup of coffee, a shark was swimming round the boat but just too far away from us to get on speaking terms with it. We were moving sluggishly south, and heavy clouds were rising on the horizon. Squalls and calms still alternated.

I had no detailed chart of the Azuero peninsula and my nautical instructions did not go beyond Panama, so that my identification of the mountain peaks was somewhat vague.

SLOW PROGRESS

September 28th. My watch (from 2 a.m. to 8 a.m.) was not as pleasant as the previous one. Squall followed squall, accompanied by torrential downpours. The wind kept shifting. At the helm, clad in my sieve-like raincoat, I was soaked from head to foot. I made what headway I could, steering with care, trying to make use of every breath of wind that blew. I was chilled to the marrow, and reflected that there would probably be many a watch like this before we would gain a good, steady wind.

By daybreak, we were in a flat calm, and I hauled down the sails. When the clouds lifted, the peninsula of Azuero was well in sight, to the north-west. As the morning grew sunny, we spread sails and clothes on the deck to dry.

We tidied the cabin and checked our victuals. The bananas were over-ripe and we had to throw a lot away. Before lunch, Farge had a swim round the boat. I did not like him doing this in these shark-infested waters and kept a sharp look out from the rigging.

That afternoon, the boat was steering herself, with the helm lashed. For several hours, a fine dorado played round us. I tried to harpoon it, but failed. I tried to tempt it with a baited line, but it refused to take it. Farge threw it a piece of tinfoil; it hurled itself upon it eagerly, swallowed it, and then spat it out with a look of utter disgust.

By sunset, the weather was fine and the atmosphere clear. I cast a last long glance at the high peaks of the Azuero peninsula as they grew blurred on the northern horizon; it was my last sight of Central America.

To the south, the weather looked as if it were clearing. In the early hours of the night, visibility was excellent. The Pole Star was still plainly visible. This companion of many a long night watch was now only just above the horizon and I wondered whether this would be my last sight of it. Soon I should no longer be able to determine my latitude by its gleam. I took out my sextant to take a sight on it one last time.

Squalls and rain returned. The log was not functioning well enough to give me reliable indications, despite the daily care I lavished on it. Perhaps the Walker oil had thickened and was gumming up its works. I decided that for the next few days it would be better to try an American typewriter oil. We had at least six varieties of oil on board.

FROM PANAMA TO THE GALAPAGOS

Three weeks of tiresome chopping and changing. Taking into account the strength of the current and the paucity of astronomical observations, I decided that we should keep a strict watch on our course and note down, hour by hour, the average log and direction, in order to be able to determine our position with greater accuracy.

The mainsail, instead of taking on a nice shape, was sagging badly. A poor effort to begin with, and the alterations made at Colon were turning out to be no improvement. The roping had been spoilt and the earings were not strong enough; I would have to change them. With that sail, the area of which had already been reduced, there was far too much loss when sailing close on a wind.

My staysail, which I had bought as a second-hand bargain, though made of excellent canvas, was not setting too well either. During the whole of this crossing, I was forced to sail as close-hauled as possible, tacking constantly to make progress against head winds. After passing Cape Mala, our progress became very slow. I kept dreaming of a pointed, deep hull, with raking lines and flat sails similar to Gerbault's *Firecrest*, which, in these conditions, would have been making fine headway.

The weather was fairly good during the following days. When the sun came out in the mornings, I was able to take straight bearings and to obtain a reasonable longitude (azimuth approximating east). No other observations to ascertain latitude. But I was more interested in getting as far south as possible without letting myself drift eastward and without cutting the island of Malpelo in half on a dark night! The oaken stem of *Kurun* was pretty solid, but not strong enough for that!

The cutter was losing speed through her pitching in the choppy sea; she was drifting a good deal but, little by little, we were edging further south. I was certain that we were pulling out of the doldrums. The look of the sky strengthened my conviction.

September 29th. Immediately after we had had our morning coffee at eight o'clock, I noticed that the trailing line was taut; a fine dorado, well hooked. This time the line, with its end of excellent stainless steel thread and businesslike bait, held. I hauled on the stout hempen rope with a fisherman's strong and regular pull and quickly had the catch on board. A fine fish: four feet, four and a half inches; it almost seemed a pity to drag so

SURROUNDED BY WHALES

handsome a specimen out of its element. Its magnificent colours changed continually until it died. I hate killing the creatures, which is done by plunging a specially filed knife into the head.

A shark came nosing round later that morning but remained at a safe distance.

For lunch we had dorado, obviously enough: slices fried in the pan, and washed down with one of our few remaining bottles of white wine which we had saved for 'fish days'. This meal became spectacular for another and more literal reason. We were surrounded by whales, spouting here, there and everywhere. At times they would leap right out of the water, falling back with an enormous splash that shot the water up like a geyser. When they spouted, a powerful jet spurted up from their spiracles, and when they dived, their tails stood up vertically as if waving goodbye. The boat, surrounded by these monsters, some within a hundred and fifty feet of us, seemed horribly fragile. One blow from one of their tails could have splintered our hull.

The night was pitch-black—squalls, rain. Throughout the twenty-four hours, we had covered fifty-five miles by the log.

September 30th. The brass sheet, fixed round the mast to prevent chafing, split. It was the sheet given me by Commander Bertschy at Colon, the one that had cost us so much trouble to fix. The third since Lisbon—.

Dorado for lunch. This time cooked in a stock, with onions. I succeeded in making an excellent mayonnaise.

In the afternoon, we watched a dorado chasing flying fish, and were amazed at the ease with which the larger fish swam and leaped after its prey.

During the twenty-four hours, we had covered fifty-four and a half miles by the log.

Sunday, October 1st. The weather was excellent after the drizzle of the night. The sky was clear, the sea blue. I was glad to be able to announce to my companion that we had definitely finished with the doldrums. At 10.15 a.m., I went about on a long westward tack. We were not far from Malpelo as to longitude; if our latitude—which I tended to ignore through lack of observations—was what I hoped it was, we might be sighting Malpelo with the setting of the sun.

Before our dominical lunch, I set my balloon jib. We opened a

FROM PANAMA TO THE GALAPAGOS

bottle of Chilean sparkling wine, a gift from 'the Princess'. She had given us a case of it with instructions to drink a bottle every Sunday. This Sunday was one of the last days we had bread, for we had been unable to obtain bread with good lasting qualities at Panama.

At 5 p.m., I took in the mainsail. The bolt-ropes had stretched at the peak and at the clew and it was high time to renew the earings. As I was busy working on them astern of the boom, I noticed that *Kurun* was surrounded by sharks. I dropped everything, and a few moments later was busy handling, not the marline spike, but the harpoon. There they came prowling, rubbing against the hull, even bumping into the rudder. Farge threw some pieces of tinfoil among them, but they spurned them. Their scaly hides were scraping my precious underwater paint—confounded brutes, just trying to provoke me. Twice on the port beam I spied one and had a throw, but they were too deep and the harpoon, sharp though it was, failed to pierce their tough skins. These failures made me all the keener. I followed a shark that was swimming from the bows to the stern, not far below the surface. It had the impudence to rub itself against the fitting for the port shore. With all my strength, I hurled the harpoon and this time it penetrated and at the right place—crosswise under the skin. This one is ours, I said to myself. But even though it measured only about seven feet in length, I had to hang on for all I was worth. The shark was no doubt aiming at drawing the line away—I was aiming at drawing it in. Three-eighths of an inch thick, the line was cutting into my fingers cruelly, but I would not let go. I drew it in, and up, but while Farge was taking photographs, its thrashing suddenly tore the harpoon out of its flesh and it shot like an arrow into the deep. All I had left was a small piece of flesh on the harpoon—not to mention the weals on my hands. By that time, all the other sharks had departed, so our sport was ended for that day.

I returned to my work on the mainsail. We were able to set it again just before nightfall and continue our course with a sail that fitted far better.

The night was black and starless.

October 2nd. At 3.15 a.m., the gaff came down. The splice of the standing end of the halyard had parted. The sail having stretched,

A SIGHT AT LAST

the splice had chafed in the block and had drawn. All sail had to be taken in. The iron fitting at the head of the gaff had slightly damaged the mast, though I had been quick in taking in the sail. That was the first time one of my splices had drawn and I was annoyed about it. Before setting the staysail again, I made a new splice with a stout extra seizing for safety's sake.

Shortly before daybreak, I had an opportunity of taking an excellent sight of the star Canopus. With considerable satisfaction, I jotted down altitude and time in my notebook for further calculations: for those two figures contained my latitude, the azimuth of that beautiful star being fairly near the south. A short time later, a glorious sun rose; hardly had it risen 15° above the horizon before I was taking its altitude as well. After having been without a precise bearing since the 28th, I was at last going to be able to work out my position by cross-checking the data of my two observations.

That morning, I had no urge to harpoon the many porpoises that were gambolling round the boat. I was too busy making calculations, dallying happily with logarithms.

At the onset of night, schools of porpoises were still playing round the boat. In the strongly phosphorescent water, they were racing one another, leaving luminous trails on a fairyland sea. The sky, in contrast, was overcast and dark. Suddenly a small rent appeared in the clouds to the north, and what should I see but a small star freeing itself from the horizon due north—the Pole Star. Seeing it once again like that delighted me. It was definitely its last appearance until the final stage of my long voyage.

October 3rd. During the last hours of the night, the sky cleared for a few minutes which allowed me to take several sights of Canopus and Procyon, and in the morning I was fortunate enough to catch the sun. Again I threw myself into calculations. We were some forty miles south-south-east of the island of Malpelo.

The sky was cloudy and the breeze variable, but I was now certain that *Kurun* would not lie rotting in the doldrums.

October 4th. The night was very black; it rained without a break. I was drenched. The rain stopped about 2 p.m., but the sky remained overcast throughout the rest of the day. With nightfall, the rain returned. Not a single astronomical observation possible all day.

FROM PANAMA TO THE GALAPAGOS

October 5th. Very dark night. Visibility nil. Low, heavy cloud. Rain all night. Squalls. The wind exceedingly variable. Sea choppy and lumpy. We were saturated.

For exactly one hour a fine breeze blew. By 2.50 p.m., we were becalmed. We took in all sail. It had stopped raining and we made an attempt to dry our clothes.

Quantities of anatifers had attached themselves to the log line, which was curious, for anatifers are shellfish of the barnacle tribe and the line of the log presented a rotating surface. We spent a considerable time picking them off.

On opening the galley drawer allocated to certain food stores, I found a crawling mass of mixed insects. Calling to Farge that the hunt was up, I began a veritable massacre; we cracked and crushed mercilessly, after which we liberally applied D.D.T. and fly-tox. It was a carnage. Unfortunately, the insects had lodged themselves in the most inaccessible places, and it took us weeks to get rid of them all.

At 5.40 p.m., we made sail again in a light south-west wind. A dark night.

October 6th. Squall after squall all day. Overcast sky. Disgusting weather. A choppy sea in which we made no headway. We drifted to leeward badly.

Two rolls in the mainsail; No. 3 jib.

We were wet and chilled, and had to warm ourselves with bowls of broth. All our clothes were sopping wet and our oilskins like icicles. A nasty leak in the deck near the bulwark on the port side amidships by the shore-leg's fittings forced me to move my books to prevent them getting any damper.

October 7th. Shortly after midnight, I noticed an ugly squall bearing rapidly down upon us. I did not take my eye off it, certain that it was bringing some strong wind with it.

By 12.45 a.m., I had taken in the staysail as the breeze had freshened. The waves were breaking and the wind was beginning to whistle in the rigging. I woke Farge: 'Be ready to come up any moment; I think we may have to take everything in.'

The breeze shifted to the south, freshening steadily. We hove-to. Daybreak should settle the matter.

At 6.30 a.m., we had to take two rolls in the mainsail. A strong south wind, velocity 6 to 7. Squall following squall. Rain.

WET AND MISERABLE

After lunch, the wind eased a little. At 3 p.m., I set the staysail and we continued on our course. We were shipping a considerable amount of water. Not long afterwards, I had to take in the staysail again on account of a squall. Then set it again, then take it in—. For days on end, squalls came our way in endless succession, and not before October 11th, late in the afternoon, was I able to take the rolls out of the mainsail.

In the afternoon, a shark came and lashed the rudder and the starboard quarter with its tail.

Not one astronomical observation all day.

We continued thus until the 11th in a fresh south-south-west breeze, a heavy sea and continual squalls, keeping four rolls in the mainsail. The sea made heavy going, and the brave little *Kurun* was catching it from every quarter. At times, the end of the jib-boom was right in the water. Once, when a flurry of wind coincided with a nasty wave, the lee rail vanished as the sea washed right over it. But we couldn't afford not to sail. The deck had never been so thoroughly washed, and the cabin had to be kept hermetically closed. All our clothes were wet and could not be dried; everything below was damp. I had to watch my jibs spoiling in the sail locker without being able to do a thing about it. The mainsail, which had to be kept with a number of rolls in it, was not improving either. My southwester was going mildewed on my head. We took it in turns to wear both the oilskins on top of each other, but could not stop them decomposing and sticking together. We were freezing and considered getting out the blankets for the bunks.

Laboriously we were making our way a little further west. I thought of the fine sailing boat with raking lines that I had hankered after in the doldrums. In the present circumstances she would not have behaved at all well: she would have plunged much deeper. We were decidedly better off in a boat like *Kurun*.

Störtbecker III had preceded us, a short time before, along the same route, and when we reached the Galapagos I heard that she had had a very bad crossing: I admire the fine curves of Rasmussen's craft very much, but boats like his are considerably inferior to *Kurun* for all-weather crossings.

October 8th. 4.50 a.m. Navigation lights of a steamer on her way to America, abaft the starboard beam. This was the only ship we

FROM PANAMA TO THE GALAPAGOS

sighted on this crossing and on the next laps across the whole Pacific.

In the morning, I succeeded in taking a sight of a pale sun that peered through the clouds for a few moments and then retired. I secured an approximate longitude.

October 9th. The radio faded out. Farge charged the batteries and checked the spare ones. He also cut up an old tin can and fixed it to the mast as a protection against the wear caused by the parrel.

A grey bird, a sea-gull type, flew round the boat and tried unsuccessfully to settle on the masthead. The spider was in its way.

October 10th. This morning, I was able to take a sight of Canopus at dawn; a little later, I managed to catch the sun, just as on the previous days.

The sights gave me a position that differed considerably from my estimate. I had reckoned on a current bearing us south-south-west as shown on the pilot chart for the month of October. In fact, the current ran in exactly the opposite direction. This did not surprise me unduly; I attributed the difference to a surface current caused by the strong wind that had been blowing in the same direction for several days. The French nautical instructions are not particularly eloquent on the subject of currents in this region. This is what they say: 'In the region between the Gulf of Panama and the Galapagos, the currents are variable and uncertain. Currents flowing towards the north-east have been noted, running with a speed of two and a half knots, or in the opposite direction at the same speed.' To be a hundred miles further north than we had reckoned was a severe disappointment. With this head wind, it meant several days longer at sea.

October 11th. The breeze eased. In the afternoon, I took the rolls out of the mainsail and continued laboriously to beat to windward.

October 14th. Towards 1.30 a.m. I woke up, and, going on deck, saw Farge, harpoon in hand, busily trying his luck with a school of porpoises that were playing round us. He told me he had made eight strikes but had not succeeded in lodging the harpoon in the fish fair and square. I tried my hand at it too, but never got a sufficiently favourable grip. Twice I made a strike, but too far below the surface for the harpoon to be able to penetrate deeply enough.

At dawn, as on the three preceding days, I contrived to take

INGRATITUDE OF A BIRD

sights of a pale sun playing hide and seek behind the clouds for a few moments before it vanished altogether. I knew only my approximate longitude, for other observations were out of the question. I did my utmost to head further south.

Two sharks came and, as others had done repeatedly of late, gave the stern a few mighty whacks with their tails. It was impossible to harpoon them. They lashed out once or twice and then plunged. I was somewhat perplexed by their behaviour and tried to discover the reason for it. For several days, I had noticed a school of dozens of small pilot fish no larger than sardines close in to the hull, near the stern and some two foot six ahead of the stem. Were these small fish the attraction? And yet sharks are supposed never to molest pilot fish.

We were still far from warm. Shortly before noon, the temperature of the air was 74.3° and the temperature of the water, near the surface, 77° .

At night, the wind blew in gusts, sometimes pretty hard, so that the sea came up to the scuppers.

October 16th. Towards the end of the day, a grey bird circled round us for a long time trying to settle. At nightfall, in obvious distress, it perched on the rudder head—a singularly uncomfortable position. I picked it up and put it down on the deck, out of the wind, between the shore-legs and the pram. Farge offered it some biscuit, some fresh water and even a little fish that had been washed into the scuppers. But the bird would accept nothing. It merely wanted to go to sleep, which it did, very peacefully.

In the early hours of the night, during a bright spell, I took some bearings on Vega, the Lyre and the moon.

October 17th. We had been sailing with the tiller lashed for several days by now, and the night watches had been uneventful. We had leisure for reading and writing, occasionally going on deck to check our course. I even dozed at times; the boat was perfectly safe.

With the dawn, the bird was still on the deck, and apparently feeling better, for it swallowed the fish Farge tendered it once more in one gulp. During the morning, it rose and flew away, having fouled the deck in no uncertain manner. Its ingratitude seemed almost human.

The sea was now perfectly smooth and we were drifting a little. What feeble breeze there was had shifted to the south. I hauled as

FROM PANAMA TO THE GALAPAGOS

close to the wind as I could, then made as much southward headway as possible on the port tack. During the morning, I had set the balloon jib.

We devoted the day to sewing; tranquilly we overhauled our wardrobes. It was still chilly. Morning temperature 66.2° for the air, and 71.6° for the surface of the water. I decided to get out the blankets. Late that afternoon, a whale came nosing round the boat.

Before sunset, I noticed that the copper sheeting round the mast was tearing away even worse through the chafing of the gaff jaws, especially on the port side. The leather of the jaws was quite rubbed away and the wood was beginning to show wear.

Not a single astronomical observation all day.

October 18th. Toward one o'clock in the morning, I found that the shackle of the boom lift had vanished. At dawn, by a curious chance, I found the two parts lying on the deck. In future, as for the main sheet shackle, the bolt would be secured with a wire lashing.

The sky, overcast in the morning, gradually cleared. Blue patches appeared and the weather became splendid. It was so long since I had seen it like this that it made me profoundly happy. This was a blue southern sea basking under a brilliant sky. The water was smooth and the wind was shifting to the south-south-east. At long last we had entered the region of good weather—and gained the trade wind.

Toward the end of the morning, we hauled in the log to clear the line once again of anatifers and other crustaceans. In the Atlantic, I had steeped the line in copper sulphate and it had never become fouled. Before leaving Balboa, I had decided to try Stockholm tar; apparently the tar did not discourage the shellfish—it may even have attracted them.

Next, the observations. We were nearing the islands and it was time to determine our position with the greatest possible accuracy. An excellent meridian gave me the latitude. I had thought we had crossed the line that morning, but we must have crossed it the day before, or even the day before that. With those confounded currents, navigation was apt to be full of surprises.

We were a hundred and twenty miles from Chatham Island, but further south, which was excellent, for in the vicinity of the

WE CROSS THE LINE

islands, the currents are supposed to run north-north-west and are sometimes very strong. A sailing boat without auxiliary engine had therefore to be particularly on the alert. It was better to make a landfall from the south.

Another day, and we ought to sight land. But crossing the line had to be celebrated, though a little tardily. I instructed the cook to prepare a strong punch No. 1. And with lunch we would have one of 'the Princesses's' bottles of bubbly even if it were not Sunday.

A light breeze. I rectified our course to the west, and *Kurun*, tiller still lashed, kept to her course with the main sheet well paid out, the balloon jib well-filled, and the staysail well sheeted in.

New sights in the afternoon, taken of the sun and the moon, confirmed my position.

October 19th. At dawn, Farge, whose watch it was, sighted land, and very proud of it he was, waking me up to tell me. He had made no mistake—there was Chatham Island, just on the starboard bow. It did not stand high above the horizon, but visibility was perfect that morning. The Galapagos!

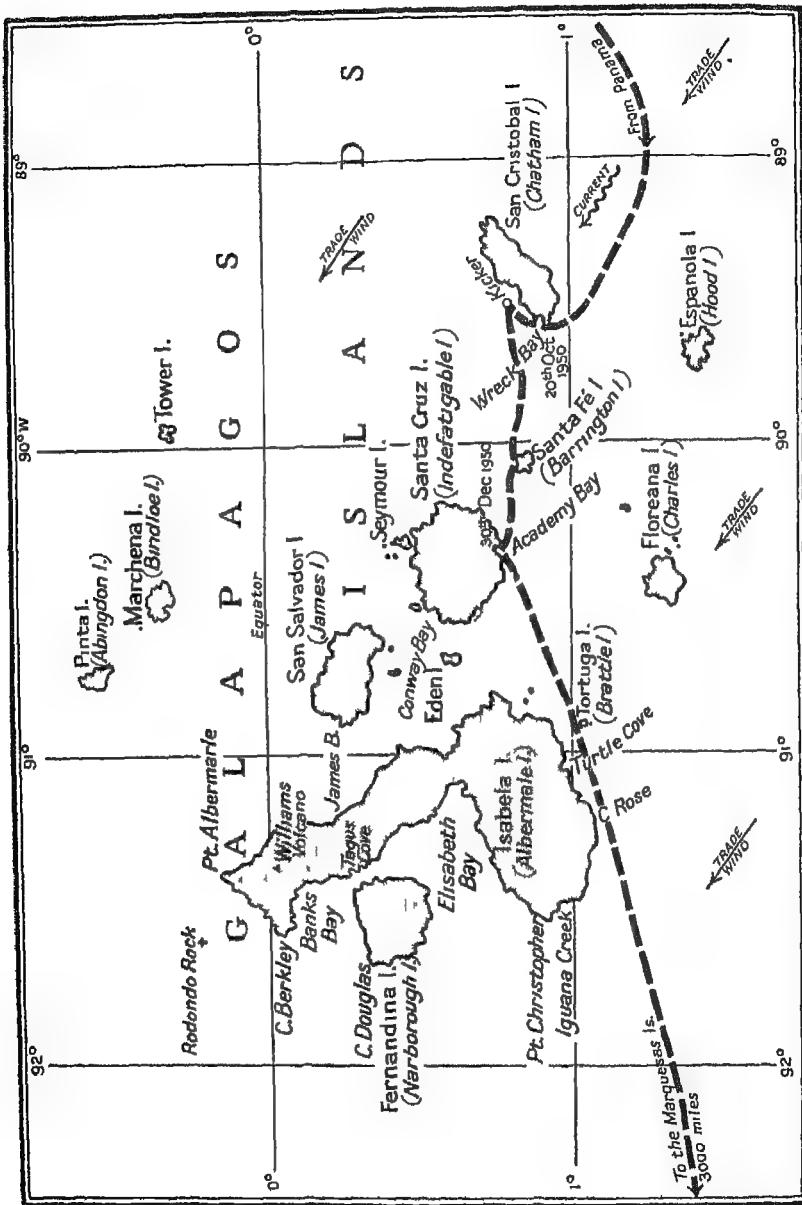
We were now sailing by sight, running before the wind. At 1 p.m., I sighted Hood Island on the port beam. The wind was very light, and in spite of the balloon jib being boomed out, our progress was slow. The good night's sleep we had promised ourselves after we had anchored would not be ours yet awhile.

Chatham began to appear higher and more compact on the horizon; we could begin to see objects in relief, and perspectives were becoming clearer. The island consists of volcanoes risen from the sea, rocks of a wild aspect.

At sunset, we were still eighteen miles from Wreck Point, but owing to the amazing clarity of the atmosphere, we could easily distinguish Hood, Barrington and other high peaks of Indefatigable Island some sixty miles away.

The night was glorious, brilliant with scintillating stars. The dark mass of the land and the mountain tops could be seen in clear outline. A southern night. The wind dropped and it was the current that bore us inshore. Several whales were playing in the calm waters.

October 20th. We were within a few miles of land and at 3 a.m. I lowered the sails to await the dawn. I took my Radius lamp and placed it at water level near the stem, to attract fish. Multitudes of



A SAVAGE PROSPECT

little ones came along, but the big ones, for whom I waited with my pronged spear ready, took good care to keep at a safe distance.

I went and lay down for a while, although I knew it was risky to relax when so near land; Farge took over the watch. I fell asleep and my companion did not wake me at the time I had rigorously fixed. I woke just the same, a little later, and I was obliged to comment on this lack of discipline on board.

Daybreak. We were within five miles of land and we could see the waves breaking over the whole basalt coastline, rock that would smash any ship at the first contact. The sun was beginning to light up the coast, revealing its grandiose savagery, an impressive scenery unscathed by the works of man. The black Whale Rock was hemmed round with the white foam of the breakers; aloft, the highest of the craters reached some 2,500 feet.

I was in no hurry and took my time admiring the scene. A seal came to inspect us, displayed interest in the log line, and showed its nice round head within inches of the boat. It would have been child's play to harpoon it or put a bullet through its head, but it would have been a crime to do so. It had a kindly, friendly look about it—almost human.

We enjoyed a leisurely cup of coffee and I had another close look at the excellent chart presented me by Captain Beverstock. I studied the detailed inset of Wreck Bay, the main anchorage of the island. Its entrance presented no difficulties.

Farge had the book containing Gerbault's story of his entry into the Bay in *Firecrest*—it is a moving story but surprisingly inaccurate in its details. Gerbault talks of a 'narrow and tortuous channel', whereas the channel in question is wide, dead straight and free from snags. 'Lido Point', he writes, 'disappeared beneath the foam.' A cataclysm would be needed to produce such an occurrence.

I went on reading. 'Treacherous coral spikes lay in wait for me below the surface.' Whereabouts? And then, 'I owed my safety to a rapid pull on the helm.' But the axis of the channel is indicated by leading marks that are as clear today as they were in Gerbault's time. And there are other simple leading marks that enable the sailor to determine easily exactly where he can manoeuvre to the fullest extent. This is the A.B.C. of navigation.

Unperturbed by the impressive narrative of my illustrious predecessor, I made sail at 8.20 a.m. There was a steady wind and

FROM PANAMA TO THE GALAPAGOS

Kurun was soon making excellent headway. The seal followed us for a while, playing round the hull. It was swimming before our bows as if to show us the way, pausing occasionally as if waiting for us to catch up. Its movements were incredibly graceful. At last it left us.

At 8.55 a.m., I had reached the line Dalrymple—Wreck Point. I passed within two miles of the Point on which the sea was crashing furiously. On an absolutely deserted coastline, breakers such as these are a most impressive spectacle. Rocks of black basalt have a sinister look, even in full sunshine. We were sailing through violent eddies, and a line where two currents met, running towards Barrington Island, could clearly be seen.

At 9.40 a.m., Kicker Rock stood out from Wreck Point. I made for Dalrymple and soon afterwards we sighted the houses of Puerto Chico. I began to beat up to the anchorage, and one tack I made brought us close to Lido Point, against which the waves were breaking. There was, however, plenty of water. The boat went to windward with perfect ease and a fine speed.

'Stand by the anchor!' Three or four more tacks and we were at the far end of the bay.

'Take in the staysail!' I put her head in the wind and dropped anchor a few hundred feet north of the pier-head.

'Take in the jib!' My companion became entangled in the sail, and the boat drifted off lamentably. I finished the manoeuvre, furious at having put up such a poor show.

A show it had been, for our approach had been watched. A small launch came out to call on us, circling round us while we took in the mainsail and put the gaskets round it. In the launch was the Governor of the Galapagos, accompanied by the doctor. We were given a cordial welcome, enhanced by the doughty punch that Farge had prepared to receive the 'authorities'.

I conversed in laborious English with Commander Paez, while the little doctor of Farfan, who spoke only Spanish, remained silent behind his round black beard.

Programme: tidy things on board and sleep.

The authorities having departed, we celebrated our arrival and the end of the doldrums by opening a bottle of Veuve Clicquot which had been given us by our Consul at Panama. A twenty-five days' crossing. Not too bad.

FEELING GOOD

The weather splendid. Sun. Fine fresh south-east trade wind. Temperature ideal. Air limpid and dry, in marked contrast to the atmosphere of the doldrums and the humid warmth of Central America. Silence. The water was pure and clear; we could see the bottom clearly as we watched the thousands of brilliantly coloured fish disporting themselves.

Rejoicing in my robust health, I filled my lungs with the delectable air. I was happy.

CHAPTER X

THE GALAPAGOS

We did not go ashore until the next day. Meanwhile I inspected the place through my binoculars. Wreck Bay, or the Bay of Puerto Chico, is a well-sheltered cove offering safe anchorage. At the far end is a dazzlingly white sandy beach, from which a pier, now old and ramshackle, had been built out. Beyond, the land disappeared beneath a dense but withered vegetation—we had arrived during the dry season. A few bright green clumps of cacti lent some aspect of life to the reddish expanse.

Higher up, the landscape changed: the mountains have their own plant life. I could see two palm trees, and two houses, one of them in ruins. Later I was to learn that this was the village of Progresso. The chimneys of the sugar-works, mentioned in the Nautical Instructions, had vanished years before. The village, wooden cabins with corrugated iron roofs, was interesting only in being bizarre. The tonal qualities of the scene were remarkably rich and the light was of an almost unbearable brightness.

Wreck Bay is ringed round with blocks of black basalt, inlaid with small sandy beaches that sparkle in the sunlight. The lighthouse is worthy of special mention, for it is the only one in the whole archipelago, a small pylon with a lamp. The manual of lighthouses gives it two flashes per second: a flight of Spanish imagination, for the lighthouse does not flash at all. ‘Black light with grey flashes,’ the sailors say. Yet on special occasions, the lighthouse fulfils its functions; I happened to be present on one or two of these occasions, and felt tempted to raise a cheer. The flash, however, is by no means so frequent as it is claimed to be.

The silent bay was full of life. Numbers of blue-footed boobies were diving round the boat with a whistling sound as they flew through the air, followed by a ‘floosh’ as they sped like arrows into the water. At times, a dozen struck the water at exactly the same instant.

As an aquarium, the bay was an unending marvel and we had

THE PADRE

hardly anchored before I put out a line. It was like being on a well-stocked fishpond.

As soon as we set foot ashore, we met the Padre, a tranquil greybeard who, axe in hand, was at work on his church. He had not been on the island many months and was just starting to build a chapel, helped by his congregation. He was a man who radiated gentle kindness. Many years before, he had visited France, and he still remembered a few words of French which we, unfortunately, could rarely understand, so much did his pronunciation disguise them. Farge attempted to converse in Latin with him, but I suspect that Farge's Latin was not much better than the Padre's French, though they did string a few sentences together; but Farge, who did not know a single word of Spanish, had the miraculous gift, a gift I totally lack, of being able to make himself understood. I appreciated this ability of his, and he invariably acted as my interpreter.

The small wooden chapel was being built at the highest point of the sandy beach, a modest little edifice, touching in its very simplicity. We were present at its inauguration, having received a formal invitation to the ceremony. From the altar hung quantities of many-coloured ribbons, the ends of which were held by prominent members of the congregation. As captain of a vessel in the roads, I was counted as one of the prominent and had to hold a ribbon in my hand.

Puerto Chico is the capital, the lung, of the Galapagos. It is a picturesque but poverty-stricken hamlet, for the resources of the archipelago are exceedingly restricted, though this perhaps is a blessing in having safeguarded it from human cupidity. Happy are those countries without wealth: the world leaves them in peace.

In Puerto Chico, there are neither streets nor shops, and even the most usual and ordinary things are not to be found there. Fortunately, *Kurun* was well provided with everything necessary to enable us to live on our own resources for months on end.

Since the inhabitants are invariably short of everything, the arrival of a boat—a rare event—is considered an excellent occasion for bartering. Hardly had we set foot ashore before all kinds of offers were being made to us. Had we only had some nails, or shirts, or anything useful to spare, we could have made many people very happy.

THE GALAPAGOS

The dwellings are wretched cabins of ineptly joined planks; they are dirty and neglected and overcrowded—people live in heaps. The huts are papered on the inside with pages of American magazines; the pictures in these periodicals astound the people of Puerto Chico. They pestered us for magazines, but, alas, we had none of those either.

The people are mainly Ecuadorians. Since the war, their numbers have increased to several hundreds. The Indians prefer to live by themselves on the heights.

The activity of the harbour is limited to the needs of the island, and these are few; the fishing in the waters of the archipelago is prodigious, and the Ecuadorian Government levies a tax on fishing vessels. The famous American tunny-ships (before the war even the Japanese frequented these waters) come from San Pedro or San Diego in California, covering thousands of miles to catch tunny-fish. Collecting the tax gives rise to sundry complications and tax evasion is rife.

The tunny-boats are pleased enough to make use of the bays of the Galapagos. Though Wreck Bay is not their favourite port of call, we saw several of them. These vessels are veritable floating factories, in which fishing has been industrialized in a way to which Europeans have not yet become accustomed. The crews, too, look strange to us. Of herculean build, wearing what look like baseball caps and cowboy shirts, they appear more like sportsmen than fishermen. And yet they catch fish. Live bait is used, on short bamboo rods that make it possible for the magnificent fish to be hauled in without loss of time. The men stand at the stern, their feet at water level. The main problem is the catching of bait—sardines. At times, it takes longer to catch the sardines than to catch the tunny. And the sardines have to be kept alive; they are housed in large aquariums. They carry a flying boat that is used for spotting fish. When fish are plentiful, the work is hard, but profits are high and life on board is comfortable and well organized.

Some years ago, the fish attracted an enterprising American, Mr. Mann, to Chatham. He began building a refrigeration plant and had a fleet of small motor-boats equipped for fishing; Chatham Island is well on its way to being transformed.

The Galapagos are beautiful and strange. Some of their characteristics are unique. The islands were given their name by a

'THE ENCHANTED ISLANDS'

Flemish cartographer. *Galapagos* was the Spanish word, during the Middle Ages, for the large shields used by soldiers when storming fortresses: a name given also, on account of the shape of their shells, to the giant turtles that abound in the archipelago. Later the islands became generally known as 'Las Encantadas', the enchanted islands, for sailors used to believe that they floated on the surface of the sea.

The Galapagos are volcanic; some of the craters are still active, the one on Albemarle, for instance. Their slopes are covered with vegetation that offers considerable contrasts according to altitude, ranging from the cactus forests—the cacti reach many feet in height and are veritable trees—to the coffee shrubs, the orange trees, and the potato fields. This is one reason why such varying accounts of the islands have been given by different travellers, each having seen but one aspect of them.

The climate is delightful, never too hot and never cold; the average temperature of the low-lying parts is 72°; rainfall is moderate. These favourable conditions are due to the Humboldt or Peruvian current, its stream of cold water going as far as the South American coast to curve into the Gulf of Panama and join the equatorial current. For an archipelago such as the Galapagos, which lies right across the Equator, it acts as a magnificent thermic regulator.

If the coastal strip of the islands is dry for part of the year (Darwin, who came here during the dry season, drew some erroneous conclusions from what he found), the heights have the benefit of the *garua*, a kind of providential drizzle. To pass from the coast to the central mountains, a journey of some two hours, is an enchanting experience.

The fauna of the Galapagos is unique and of considerable interest.

The principal animal found in the Galapagos is the giant tortoise, which can achieve a weight of more than five hundred pounds and a length of nearly a fathom. About sixty million years ago, these tortoises were common over the entire globe; but after the passing of some millions of years, they have become altogether extinct except in two places: the Aldabra archipelago (Seychelles, Mauritius, Réunion) and the Galapagos. Why these tortoises, which are related to the giant fossils of India, should continue to

THE GALAPAGOS

exist here when they have vanished from all other parts, is a mystery which is made stranger by the fact that there are fifteen different species of tortoise in the archipelago and each species inhabits a particular island.

Are they likely to become extinct here? The whalers and pirates of the past certainly decimated them, for their flesh is delicious as food and must have provided a welcome feast for people who had been at sea for a long time in days when the food on board ship was extremely deficient. And also these creatures have, attached to their under shell, a true water reservoir, a phenomenon soon discovered by the sailors, who found it most useful, as water is very scarce and it is possible to die of thirst in these parts.

Apart from the giant tortoises, the Galapagos boast two species of iguana that are found nowhere else, neither alive nor in the fossil state. One of them, the *amblyrhyncus cristatus*, is a water creature, whereas the other, the *conolophus subcristatus*, is a land animal. Their prehistoric appearance fascinated us and we caught several without killing them simply to study them at close quarters.

The sea iguana lives along the coast among the basalt blocks; it is black, though the male has yellow and orange spots, its jaws are furnished with sharp teeth and it is a good swimmer. The land iguana is very much a land animal and never ventures down to the beach; it cannot swim, in any case. It is much heavier in build and its colour varies from yellow to brick red; it closely resembles a fairy-tale dragon. We had an epic chase after one on Barrington Island; it slipped through our hands and we had to smoke it out of its crevice. When captured, it blew just like a dragon, and looked quite supernatural. It was a *conolophus pallidus*, a sub-genus of the *conolophus subcristatus*. We felt very pleased with ourselves at having caught a dragon with our own hands.

Birds must be included in this account of animal life. Darwin, who visited the Islands in 1835 and to whose memory a monument has been erected at Wreck Bay, noted one hundred and eight species and sub-species, of which seventy-seven were to be found nowhere other than in this archipelago. As many as there are islands, so there are kinds of finches, but we also found owls, turtle-doves, pelicans, herons, pink flamingoes, sea magpies and humming birds. The archipelago is, moreover, the only tropical habitat of penguins.

VISITORS TO THE ISLANDS

The first navigators brought with them horses, pigs and dogs, which escaped and reverted to their wild state. On Albemarle Island, for instance, a man cannot go ashore alone and unarmed without running the risk of being devoured by packs of savage dogs.

When they were discovered, the Galapagos were uninhabited. Today there are living there a curious but nevertheless an attractive group of people, for they all came to the Galapagos to escape the incoherence and sensationalism of modern life.

Though there is a doctor at Puerto Chico, the majority of the inhabitants do without medical attention. Their robust health can be ascribed to the excellence of the climate. There are no diseases on the Galapagos, no fevers, no poisonous animals.

Few ships call at the islands, yet not a year passes without a few yachts seeking shelter in their bays, and most of these are American. I thought of young Herman Melville who, at the age of twenty-one, came to the Galapagos as a sailor on board the *Acushnet* of New Bedford, which he was to make famous as the *Pequod* in his great novel *Moby Dick*.

After his world cruise, William Albert Robinson and his wife returned to the Galapagos in their ketch *Sraap* to live for months filming the wild life of the islands. I was to meet him later in Tahiti.

Kurun remained anchored in Wreck Bay for over six weeks, much longer than I had anticipated, but it was time well spent, and I have even regretted occasionally that I did not prolong my stay in these happy islands even longer.

On November 1st, on waking, we were surprised to see a fine ketch flying the French colours anchored half a cable astern of *Kurun*. One French flag was rare enough in the Galapagos, but two—such an event had not occurred, as far as I know, since the visit of Du Petit-Thouars on his world cruise in *Venus* (1836-1839). This fine sturdy ketch with a distinctive French rig was *Fleur d'Océan* from St. Malo. My heart beat faster as I clambered aboard her.

Fleur d'Océan had left St. Malo on a cruise to Tahiti. The owner, Pierre Suzanne, and his wife and granddaughter were on board as well as the captain, Argod, with his wife and three small children, two young Belgians, the Van de Wiele, a sailor, and an engineer. We were all friends from the word go.

THE GALAPAGOS

On November 5th, late in the afternoon, saluted by three blasts on the foghorn of *Kurun*, *Fleur d'Océan* departed for Hood Island. After calling at the Marquesas, she was to arrive at Tahiti well before *Kurun*. From Tahiti, the Van de Wieles returned to Nicc, where they had left their own ketch, *Omoo*, to set out themselves on a successful cruise round the world.

When in port, there is always something to be done; but we did not work without respite. We went on some delightful excursions, either on foot, on horseback or on mules. Several times we ascended the heights, *arriba*, whence we could see the whole beauty of the Galapagos. There is a saying that those who have once tasted the island's guava will come back for more. For myself, I am fully prepared to believe it.

To climb means going up into the region of green things, to find oneself amid orange trees, lemon trees, guava trees and avocado pear trees. The fruit is so plentiful that it lies on the ground rotting by the ton. Who would take the trouble to pick it up? Everyone has plenty at hand.

One of the charms of the Galapagos is the absence of roads. To go from Puerto Chico to Progresso, a distance of about four miles, entails following a picturesque rocky track that demands a good sense of balance to avoid breaking one's neck. I marvelled at the mules, and even the horses, which trotted along them sure-footedly.

We called on Mrs. Cobos, the Norwegian whose husband, at that moment away on a visit to Ecuador, had received Alain Gerbault. Her name, by the way, is Karin and not Kanis as Gerbault wrote it. Upon arrival at her hacienda, hidden in the greenery, we were greeted by the ferocious baying of dogs. The ramshackle wooden house gave an impression of both poverty and grandeur. Mrs. Cobos received us with great cordiality, a worthy, courageous woman, a fine mother and a good manager, able, we gathered, to tackle anyone, revolver in hand if necessary.

On one evening that we were there, her eldest daughter Sylvia, pretty blond of sixteen, played us some old tunes on her guitar, although the presence of the crew of *Kurun* made her rather shy.

We were lent horses by Mrs. Cobos and with her son as guide went for a magnificent ride, calling on old Mr. Guldberg, her

AN EXCURSION

father, who lived alone with his other daughter Snefrid on his estate some miles away. It was a memorable visit, so far from modern life. The silence, the peace of the setting belonged to eternity.

Old Guldberg did not speak a word to us; I cannot even say that he vouchsafed us a look. He was far away, as if in a trance of beatitude. The ground was bright with oranges and avocado pears fallen from the fine trees that surrounded the house into which we were taken—a Norwegian household, every object of which showed the care with which the charming maiden lady who made us welcome tended the many reminders of home: antique furniture, carpets, ornaments. It was a strange little corner of Norway to find in this tropical island, and it had an unreal, melancholy quality.

In this absolute solitude, the life of the Guldbergs was one of work and silence. I learned that the old man had not been down to Puerto Chico for some fifteen or sixteen years. Happy where he was, he had no wish to go elsewhere.

Continuing our excursion, we crossed a lovely, clear stream—which disproved the general belief that there is no running water on the Galapagos. From there we went to the mountain lakes, startling wild horses and pigs as we rode along. At one moment, we found ourselves surrounded by a herd of pigs that had all the appearance of wild boar. Selecting the largest of them, I was about to take aim at it with my pistol, when young Cobos stopped me, pointing out that the pig had a nicked ear which signified that it was classed as a domestic animal, or, in other words, that it had an owner.

In the afternoon, by the lakeside, I made up for that disappointment. With my .22, I shot five wild duck, hitting them at distances varying between seventy-five and two hundred feet after a skilful approach. Frigate birds were circling over the highest of the lakes which lay in a volcanic crater. I amused myself by firing at them, but though I could hear a distinct smack as the bullet struck, not one of them came down.

At night, we returned to the hacienda after a fine ride. It was years since I had been on horseback, and both Farge and I envied young Cobos his ease in the saddle.

At Wreck Bay, we frequently met the Manns who lived in an

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attractive little house along the bay at Sundown Beach, some little distance from the other dwellings. Mr. Mann was the typical enterprising American to whom nothing other than business mattered. His wife, a charming and extremely beautiful woman, declared that there were times when she felt that she could no longer endure the eternal talk of fish, fish, fish.

An uncle of Mr. Mann also lived at Sundown Beach. He was an elderly bachelor of the true English breed, a great eccentric. After having lived in many lands, chiefly South America and the Indies, he had at last come to settle in the Galapagos. He often called on us. Tall and wiry, he always carried a cane, and wore his dressing gown over his ordinary clothes, with a silk square round his neck and a topee on his head. His jovial and somewhat malicious wit added a touch of the fantastic to the Wreck Bay scene.

One day, a few friends had gathered at the Manns and this uncle, his manner oddly mysterious, took me to his room. Suddenly, snatching up a sword, he brandished it round my head, making its blade whistle. I wondered what on earth he was after. After a moment, he put the sword down and confessed with a smile, 'My life's dream! To cleave a man in two, from head to foot. But I have never done it—.' He had a collection of sharp-edged blades in his room and would call me over to test and admire the keenness of their edges. At heart he was a very peaceable man.

We also became friendly with a French Canadian, Franck Balbar; the original name of his family had been Barbier. He had come to the Galapagos by chance in a yacht and had decided to stay. He was a muscular young man, a picture of health and vigour. He too had escaped from modern life and took a child-like delight in his freedom, enjoying every moment.

'I have worked all my life,' he said, 'until now. Here, I am taking my first holiday.' Many hysterical people could do with just such a holiday.

Puerto Chico would at times indulge in festivities at which everyone drank and danced. The popular drink is *pouri*, a kind of very alcoholic rum, the taste of which I did not much like. Music was provided by guitars, and the dancers danced in a state of trance-like excitement.

The children played football, and I was surprised that Gerbault,

FARGE IS ILL

himself a keen footballer, had not mentioned this. The lads of Puerto Chico even play football at night, using fireballs. They soak the balls in petrol or paraffin oil, set light to them and kick them around.

While we were there, two small fishing boats were being built. Never had I seen wood used in the way they used it. The most extraordinary pieces were utilized and I wondered how they could make anything from that that could possibly float.

Our departure was delayed by Farge's state of health. He had frequently to lie down, suffered from shivering and vomiting fits, and was losing strength. I worried about him a great deal, especially when his temperature rose to 105.8°. The doctor was unable to diagnose his complaint. Afterwards, Farge reckoned that he had been suffering from inflammation of the liver.

On November 25th, his condition appeared so serious to me that I considered having him taken to Guayaquil, there to see a specialist and be X-rayed, but he refused to hear of it. In the end, after a number of injections, his health improved, and I could once more turn my attention to continuing the voyage.

We entrusted our mail to Mrs. Butler, the secretary of the President of the Ecuadorian Republic, who had arrived at Wreck Bay in the yacht *Solana*, and I had my papers seen to by the *gobernador* so that I could set out from Chatham.

On Sunday, December 3rd, after lunch, *Kurun* put to sea with all sail set in a fine south-east wind. The weather was splendid. Several of my plans had been upset by our enforced delay at Chatham, but I did not wish to leave the archipelago without having had a closer look at Dalrymple and Kicker Rocks, and visiting Barrington and Indefatigable Islands.

Dalrymple Rock, situated within two miles of Wreck Bay, is a curious formation of basalt needles that can be considered to look like the fingers of a hand, which is why the Americans call it the Five Fingers. We passed close under it, for it rises sheer out of the water.

Kicker Rock is another freak of nature and lies a little more than seven miles from the bay. I headed straight for it. Half way there we had the pleasure of meeting a Norwegian ketch; very steady under all her white sails, she was beating up to make Wreck Bay.

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We crossed on opposite tacks, and were quite close to each other as our respective flags dipped three times as a sign of friendship—the tricolour from the peak of *Kurun* and the Norwegian ensign from the mizzenmasthead of *Ho-Ho II*.

On the deck of the ketch were two men, typical Vikings, and a fair-haired lad. It did not occur to me that it was likely we should all meet again at Tahiti, nor how much I should come to like the Bryhn family.

The proportion of the Kicker grew progressively more impressive; it is a majestic block about five hundred feet high, rising sheer out of the sea and displaying a prodigious vertical cleft. It changes in appearance according to the angle from which it is viewed. From one side, it looks like a cathedral, from another like a crouching lion, and the Ecuadorians generally call it the *leon dormiente*. This vast rock is the abode of huge colonies of gannets and frigate-birds hovering imposingly over it. Yet, on the rock itself, these large birds are dwarfed and look tiny. At the south-eastern end, several colonies of seals have established themselves on small plateaus a few feet above the water.

Slowly we circled the rock and, as we passed to leeward of it, it took all the wind out of our sails.

As nightfall was approaching, I decided to make for Barrington. I had heard a lot about the wonders of its small bay, but I had also been warned by sailors who knew of the narrowness of the channel and the speed of the current which together make it impossible to tack. To try and enter the bay without an engine was tantamount to throwing one's boat away, they said, and on no account was I to take the risk. But I wanted to have a look at the deserted island and had made up my mind to have a shot at entering the bay.

The weak lights of Wreck Bay were soon lost to sight and at midnight I saw the dark mass of Barrington to starboard. I hove to, awaiting daylight. Not before 8.40 a.m. the next day did I make sail again. Hugging the coast, I very cautiously drew closer inshore. Dozens of assorted sharks were lazily swimming on the surface, more than I had ever seen together at a time, and I then understood why, some years before, Mann had gone in for shark fishing in the Galapagos. They all looked so replete that I doubted whether they would take much interest if one of us did chance to fall overboard.

A ROBINSON CRUSOE ISLAND

Without a chart (nautical instructions did not even mention the island), I was beginning to wonder where the little bay was or even if there was one at all, when suddenly I saw the entrance. And more than that, we could see a small fishing boat sheltering at the far end of it. The passage was considerably wider than I had been given to understand and I ventured boldly in, meeting with no difficulty. I anchored within a short distance of the fishing boat, the crew of which had been signalling to us violently, convinced that we had not seen the coral reefs, which on the contrary were plainly visible to us in the transparent water. As they were leaving the bay, they came alongside us and offered us a magnificent fish that was to provide us with a delicious lunch.

We stayed a few days in that anchorage, living like Robinson Crusoes, strolling in the sun, climbing, fishing and shooting. It was one of the more delightful episodes of our stay in the archipelago.

Barrington is a small, squat, mountainous island, about five nautical miles in length, and its main charm is that it is uninhabited. The bay I had chosen was a long rectangular inlet, of uniform width and ending in a pretty beach of dazzling white sand on which a rudimentary cross marks a tomb. The water, very deep at the entrance, becomes gradually shallower until the beach is reached. It is amazingly clear and transparent—again like an aquarium in which fish of all sizes and kinds and shapes and colours play around.

I took great delight in fishing; all one had to do was to drop a line in the water and after a time haul it in. The catch was invariably beautiful, but not always edible. When, after meals, we rinsed the plates by plunging them in the water, the fish hurled themselves upon them, and when we stepped overboard on our way to the shore, they rushed to swim round our legs. Turtles were plentiful and their antics in the clear water were amusing to watch. But I never succeeded in catching one. They kept at a distance and we could never get near them even in the pram. One evening, I took my pistol and shot one in the head at a range of over a hundred feet. It turned a spectacular somersault and vanished.

A group of seals came and surrounded us. Amazing swimmers, they were not particularly shy and allowed us to approach within a few feet of them. The old males, however, tended to be aggressive and would resolutely charge if we came too near. Considering

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their size and the solidity of their heads, we thought it wiser to beat a retreat.

One day, I surprised a lovely baby seal on the beach, no larger than a cat and oddly ludicrous with its mobile, anxious little face. I chased it through the water and over some rocks before I caught it; I considered taking it on board, but realized in time that it would give us serious feeding problems.

We did no harm to the seals, for they were friendly and likeable. In the morning their barking shattered the silence of the bay. But knowing that seal oil is excellent for pouring on the water in bad weather, I decided to sacrifice just one. I chose an enormous male that bore the scars of many a fight with its fellows. It was an execution rather than a hunt. I had to chase it from its rock in order to get it down to the beach, for otherwise I should have been unable to transport it to where I wanted it. When it was within a few feet of the water, I shot it with my Mauser, finishing it off with a second bullet in the head. Even then, rolling it into the sea and towing it to a place near the boat gave us a lot of trouble.

Having got the carcase where we wanted it, we had to set to work to extract the oil, a process of which we had had no experience. We sharpened our knives and managed to cut the body into pieces. We had lit a large wood fire under a seven gallon cauldron for melting down the fat, and the result was most satisfactory, furnishing us with a large quantity of excellent oil. For a first attempt, we felt we could congratulate ourselves. That night we carefully tied the carcase of the seal to the boat so that it should not be carried away by the tide. It was still there the next day but the head was missing. Had a shark been at it?

We filled every available container on board with oil. We also tasted the flesh of our victim and found it to be delicious, especially as Farge had excelled himself in the cooking of it.

The fishermen of the neighbouring islands sometimes visit Barrington to salt and dry their catches, and sections of the beach were still covered with the fish refuse they left behind; it was a godsend to the birds of prey that abound on the island, evil looking creatures, with wicked eyes. I killed several and was amazed at their vitality. Using my pistol, I shot them with deliberation at close range. They hardly seemed to notice when they were hit. Often I had to follow the first bullet with two or three others before

MY KINGDOM

they fell. I refrained from killing any other birds, especially the turtle-doves, nice trusting little creatures which the birds of prey slaughtered right and left.

Occasionally we went out after wild goats, but the galley being well provided with food, I strictly limited the number of victims. In any case, our last shooting expedition had an upsetting effect on me. By accident, I wounded a female goat. She was a long way away, and fled, dragging her entrails behind her. I went in pursuit and was able to catch her up and put her out of her misery with my pistol. The kid which was with her had taken refuge under a clump of cacti and was bleating heartrendingly.

We used to cut up our catch on the spot and take the hunks of venison on board, tying them to the branches of a shrub. The meat was delicious, the haunches being particularly succulent.

Walks along the shore had many attractions, as indeed walks along solitary beaches always have. We took a boyish delight in strolling aimlessly along the foreshore, discovering the life that lies hidden there: fish, crustaceans, molluscs, shell-fish. I was most impressed by the crabs. I had seen many kinds of crabs by now, but never crabs like these. I remember one red and white one that scuttled along the beach with surprising speed, leaping high over the puddles. A jumping crab?

I confess that I enjoyed playing king of the island, monarch of all I surveyed, free from care, far from the world and its worries. The time soon came for us to end our indolence. On December 7th *Kurun* left Barrington.

We carried an impressive quantity of seal and goat meat, some of which was intended, not for our table, but for a plan I had long been nursing—shark-catching, in style. If only I could provide an attractive bait, I could come to terms with those masters of the sea.

Fine weather, with breeze from south to south-south-west. After this start, however, we were soon becalmed, and drifted along the north coast of Barrington. The water was very clear and as soon as we had left the bay, we saw dorsal fins by the dozen projecting from the water, but when we threw pieces of meat overboard, the sharks refused to take much interest in them. Probably they were satiated and felt no inclination to swim even a hundred feet to swallow another morsel. The lateness of the hour made it impossible to continue the experiment.

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Once we were away from Barrington, we caught a steady breeze and made excellent progress. I steered, keeping to the north of the island on the same bearings, heading for Indefatigable Island, which was well within sight. We were sure to make Academy Bay this way, and I could not understand why *Störtebecker III* had made her landfall so far north of it. For, though it may be difficult to identify a coast that has no definite landmarks and about which the handbooks give precious little information, there are some exceedingly simple methods of navigation that compensate for this deficiency.

All the same, on entering Academy Bay, I made a serious blunder. The Nautical Instructions did not mention the Bay at all, but at Wreck Bay I had gathered one or two items of information. Some houses had been marked on the small American sketch I had, and I took it for granted that the first houses I saw were these. But they were not; the ones marked were masked by a point which was also indicated on the sketch. Confusing them was foolish on my part, for I should have been able to judge the position by a small island at the mouth of the bay which I had just rounded. And there I was, going at a steady five knots, my hand firmly on the tiller, heading straight for the rocks.

As I drew nearer, I began to feel a little uneasy. It seemed to be looking less and less like what I had expected. And suddenly, straight ahead, I saw a man gesticulating violently. I could not hear what he was shouting, but his obvious agitation crystallised my misgivings. I luffed in to the wind and decided to drop anchor. Farge prepared to do so and, had he been a sailor, he would have let out a shout: No water. When I looked down, I saw there would have been no room for a big fish to swim under our keel. We were right on top of some dangerous reefs and the tide was falling. As I was realizing where I had gone wrong, two small motor-boats arrived, which had started out towards us as soon as we had dropped anchor. There were two men in them, the Angermeyer brothers; they explained to us the nature of the bay and offered to take us in tow. I declined. I thought it was dangerous to go off on the wrong tack, but I succeeded in paying off on the right tack by backing the jib. A few minutes after I had got away from the dangerous reefs, *Kurun* was anchored again, safely this time, beyond the treacherous little point.

ACADEMY BAY

Our stay at Academy Bay lasted only five days; we had fallen behind schedule and I did not want more delay. In a way, this was regrettable, for not only was Indefatigable Island (or Santa Cruz) as beautiful as its neighbours, but we also met some very pleasant people there.

The name Academy Bay originated with the schooner *Academy* which, in 1905, brought an expedition of members of the Californian Academy of Sciences to work there for eighteen months. In comparison with the small cluster of houses at Academy Bay, Puerto Chico looks quite a town. Yet a government official lived in one of the tumbledown wooden cabins.

In contrast with the population of Puerto Chico, the inhabitants of Indefatigable are mainly Europeans, and limited to a few families. This group of people had something oddly charming about them and were perhaps the most civilized little community that I met with on my voyage. They generated an atmosphere of peace, cordiality, mutual understanding, health and vigour that was inspiring. From various corners of Europe they had come, all filled with revulsion for the unhealthy miasma of the modern world, wishing to live as they pleased on their island.

The people living near the bay were dependent mainly on the sea for their livelihood; the others engaged in agriculture. All led healthy and idyllic existences.

At Academy Bay, we became friendly with the three Angermeyer brothers. Several years before the war, they had left Germany to settle in the Galapagos. Originally there had been five of them, all true deep-sea sailors, owners of fine sailing ships of which they showed me photographs. Two of them had died. The survivors were strong fellows who would have made splendid heroes in adventure films; as it was, their lives were adventures in themselves and stranger than the stories of films and novels.

After having built themselves houses, the Angermeyers, sailors born and bred, set to work building excellent fishing boats. They were all married and fathers of fine healthy children.

We also became friendly with a Swiss lady, Mme. Coray, whose husband had died a few years before, leaving her with a small daughter. Mme. Coray was as vigorous and energetic a person as her husband had been. Not only did she work, but every day she

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gave her child lessons—there is no school at Academy Bay. ‘I can do my best,’ she declared, ‘to teach her all I know myself.’

The children of Santa Cruz, those at any rate of European extraction, amaze me by their gift for languages. It was no exception to hear tots speaking in any one of three languages, and correctly at that. I was a little ashamed of my English when I was talking to them, and they could also speak Spanish, Norwegian or German.

Santa Cruz also sports an eccentric—an Alsatian named Kübler. Without him, the island would undoubtedly be a very different place. After an adventurous and chaotic life—often verging on the wrong side of the law—Kübler found himself stranded in the Galapagos. He was like a force of nature. Over sixty, he could have strangled an ox with his bare hands. His phenomenal strength was nourished by a Rabelaisian appetite. He would cut himself an enormous water-melon with his hatchet. Diffidently I would accept a small slice, and then watch him dispose of the rest with the utmost ease. He was as astute as a monkey in getting the best out of nature: a superb fisherman and a mighty hunter in the face of the Lord.

Kübler lived the life of a recluse. He had been married and had a daughter, but family life with him can hardly have been an easy one. He had built his house singlehanded; it had taken him a long time, but the result was remarkably good. Not one of the islanders had ever penetrated beyond the one large room that opened immediately from the front door. What lay beyond was a mystery. I made a tentative attempt to find out, but was speedily discouraged. Kübler was generally regarded as being deranged, if not a raving lunatic. He excelled at agriculture and had made a fine garden for himself in which fruit and vegetables grew in profusion. He had surrounded his domain with a solid stone wall because of a groundless fear of robbers, and had even fortified this wall with a raised observation post from which, gun in hand, he could guard the approaches. To make sure there would be no mistake about his intentions, he had made it known that he would shoot at sight anyone trying to climb over his wall. One day, I found him standing at his front door firing into the air. I asked him what on earth he was making all that noise for.

‘They might think I had no cartridges left,’ he said. And, after a

A DANGEROUS RECLUSE

few more shots, he went indoors, firmly shutting the door behind him. He was a crack shot and was known to possess a veritable arsenal.

The most curious part of Kübler's domain was what he called his museum. It was in front of the house, a terrace with well-kept paths, on which he displayed a bizarre assortment of sea-shells, tortoise-shells and turtle-shells, imposing whale vertebrae and jawbones, and a variety of other trophies.

Relations between Kübler and his neighbours were often strained. He was the only one on the island to grow coco-palms and his greatest delight was to devour the nuts before the eyes of the neighbours' children, whom he detested. He mixed only with the rare visitors to the island; he hated the locals who heartily reciprocated the sentiment.

I would not have minded going shooting with Kübler; an expedition with him would have been worth undertaking. He knew tracks unknown to anyone else, and there was talk of a mysterious cavern. But there was no time.

We met a New Zealander named Sanders, known as Sandy, who had recently arrived in the Galapagos and who fished with a small motor launch. He lived in a large American army tent, which was full of the most incredible bric-à-brac.

Sandy had had many adventures. Late in 1948, he had set out from Plymouth, with two Englishmen, on board the cutter *Heather Glen* (with auxiliary engine), bound for New Zealand. The cutter was wrecked in the Cocos Islands. Sandy lived alone on an island for nine months, trying to salvage the wreck. By dint of hard work, he succeeded in floating *Heather Glen*, but she was again hurled back on the shore and this time was a total loss. After a long period of melancholy solitude, Sandy was taken off the island, and after some adventures in the South Seas, landed at Academy Bay, where he had settled and was well liked by everybody.

Before we left the island, Farge and I, furnished with haversacks and water-flasks, trekked into the hills. The tracks, even longer and rougher than the one at Chatham, wound along chaotic rocks. Higher up, it became a magnificent path through exuberant vegetation. One of our aims was to collect fresh victuals for our next crossing, which, according to my calculations, would take us about a month.

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In the zone where an almost constant drizzle falls, the homesteads are scattered. A Norwegian family, the Kastdalens, have the finest plantation on the island and accorded us a friendly welcome. Here again, the family of four was a self-sufficient unit, contented with their tranquil existence. Kastdalen and his son insisted on having everything we needed carried down to the shore on their mules.

At Academy Bay, there is neither a well nor any kind of fresh water system. The rainwater is collected from the roofs and kept in cisterns. Yet, owing to the general willingness to help, we were able to replenish *Kurun's* store, filling the water-butts and the jerry-cans to capacity. Everyone insisted on making us some small present; bread, cakes, various preserves, which was more than generous, as life on the island is on a very modest scale.

Repeated attempts were made to persuade us to make our home on the island and live in peace. 'Don't you realize what you are returning to, in Europe?' they asked. I knew only too well, but I had made up my mind to carry out my programme to the last detail.

Not only did I regret having to cut short my stay at Academy Bay, but I also regretted not having the time to visit the other islands of the archipelago, in particular Floreana Island. I was to regret it even more when my friend Pierre Suzanne told me about his stay there when he had called in his *Fleur d'Océan*.

The Galapagos are not only strange and beautiful, but they also harbour some amazing human types, exemplifying the urge to work and persevere. Modern man lives alongside the prehistoric iguano. It will be a place like this, perhaps, that will see the last representative of the human race in a future age.

CHAPTER XI

THE MARQUESAS

IN the ship's journal, Gus Angermeyer had written:

*Wer das grüne kristallene Feld
pflügt mit des Schiffes eisendem Kiele
der vermählt sich das Glück
dem gehört die Welt.*

He who ploughs the green crystal field with the ship's iron keel is wedded to happiness; to him belongs the world.

That exactly expresses my feelings whenever I set sail for the open sea.

On December 12th, at 5 p.m., we weighed anchor, set all sail and left the anchorage on the starboard tack. The breeze was insignificant and we dragged ourselves along laboriously; not before 6.15 p.m. was I able to go about some quarter of a mile south of the islet at the mouth of the bay.

A little breeze rose from the south-south-east, propelling us almost reluctantly out to sea. The water was absolutely smooth. A fine evening, with Barrington and Floreana well in sight.

At 8.30 p.m., the breeze dropped and all night *Kurun* showed scarcely any wake; she was making little more than a knot and a half.

I had arranged the watches so that I should take the early morning one which would enable me to work out our position by the south coast of Albemarle, which I intended to follow. By 5.30 a.m., I could see the dark mass of the small Crossman Islands looming up to starboard, and by the time it was daylight we were near enough for me to be able to admire the volcanic craters that had crumbled into the sea and were assuming the most gorgeous colours in the sunlight.

A few of the peaks of Albemarle were still visible; the low lying part of the south-east coast could be made out only by the foamy

THE MARQUESAS

line of the breakers. Albemarle or Isabela Island is the most important of the Galapagos, being a hundred miles in length. Its population is supposed to be the least commendable of the archipelago, for it consists mainly of former convicts. Mrs. Cobos had said to me, 'If you go there, keep your hand on your revolver and your eye on your boat.' I was half desirous of having a look at the place, for I cannot bring myself to believe in the fundamental wickedness of people, even if society has cast them out.

At eleven o'clock, we were becalmed a third of a mile north of the pretty little island of Brattle; it was covered with birds which I should like to have seen more closely.

A day of drizzle and little wind.

By nightfall, *Kurun* was eight miles to the S. 34 E. of Essex Point, the south-west point of the main island.

The next morning, at daybreak, we were again alone on the immensity of the ocean. By staring in the direction of the wake, one could just make out, through the haze, the presence of Isabela. Farewell, Galapagos!

The finest of all crossings now lay before us: three thousand miles without difficulties: not one incident to be expected. There is hardly a section of the Pacific Ocean that is more deserving of its name than this region between America and Tuamotu or Low Archipelago. It is indubitably the region of the world's most reliable weather. A study of the charts for the different seasons gives, in each case, the percentage of gales as zero. Karl Angermeyer at Academy Bay had talked to me at length about this unbroken fine weather. In all his years on the Galapagos, he had only once known the wind to reach velocity 8, and then only for a few hours. From the Galapagos to Tahiti, *Kurun* did not once have to take in sail.

It is the zone—a sailor's paradise—in which the *Kon-Tiki* made her celebrated crossing.

Once I was away from the Galapagos, I expected steadier trade winds, but what I did find were gentle breezes, reaching on rare occasions velocity 4. Fortunately, the equatorial current was favourable and enabled the boat to press forward.

On the 14th, in the morning, I replaced the No. 2 jib by the balloon jib. I was to keep it set until the evening of December 22nd. The sky was often overcast, and there was sometimes a

CHRISTMAS DAY AT SEA

drizzle. The current was stronger than I had expected and carried *Kurun* a little north of her course, but she responded excellently to the helm, lashed though it was, at that particular speed.

Soon the sky cleared. On December 21st we saw our first flying fish since reaching the Galapagos (there had not been a single one in the island waters). Sea temperature was 71.6° near the surface.

On the 22nd, at 11.50 a.m., *Kurun* crossed a kind of fluid ribbon, very dense, a few fathoms wide, its colour an opaque yellow-green. Was it plankton? I had never seen plankton looking like that, if it was. It was more as if a thick liquid had been poured on to the sea. It would have been interesting to have collected a sample, but we had no means of preserving it.

After lunch we sighted whales close astern (we had already seen some on the 14th).

Numbers of bonitoes all day, but no luck with the line. Two large tunny-fish had been swimming under our keel since the early morning. At 8.15 p.m., though it was dark, I could see them distinctly near the rudder. I hit one with my harpoon, but it was no more than a glancing blow.

At 4.30 p.m., I had replaced the balloon jib which was flapping in the dearth of wind, by No. 2 jib.

On December 24th, the breeze having veered south-east, I found the boat was not responding too well to the helm which was still lashed. It occurred to me that I could rig up a flying jibboom to achieve a better balance of sail. I lashed the topsail yard to the jibboom; next I hoisted a storm-jib on the end of this improvised flying jibboom and sheeted it home; flat, this sail acted as an aerial rudder and added considerably to the stability of the boat.

Christmas Day was a day like any other to us. The sky, overcast all the afternoon, shed a few drops of rain. We were making headway just as usual. Lunch included one or two small extras to singe the day out.

On the 26th, I cast off the aftermost lee shroud so that the main-sail, checked away as far as it could go, would catch the wind better and chafe less—its sheepskin fittings were not sufficiently protective. The wind was shifting round more and more to the east, as I had anticipated, so that on the 27th, at 2 a.m., I had to unlash the tiller to keep on the course. I then decided to set the twin stay-sails which had been stowed carefully away in the forecastle since

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our stay in Panama. For the first time, they bellied out over the waters of the Pacific.

At dusk, on the 31st, we took in the mainsail and, having lit the navigation light, went below to sleep, leaving *Kurun* to run under her twin staysails. From that day until our landfall, we were both able to indulge in full nights' sleep. In such fine weather, far off the usual shipping routes, there is little risk in letting a boat sail herself. I made a practice, however, not only of keeping the navigation lights lit, but also of keeping the cabin lamp alight.

The weather remained fine and our nights were undisturbed, except for two nights when it was necessary to steer owing to some modification of sail. It was an easy life. All we had to do was to check over the rigging: oil the blocks, keep the braces well tallowed where the sheaves rubbed, occasionally adjust the guys of the booms or the braces and also the shock absorbers of the tiller or the gaskets which prevented yawing. In spite of all our precautions, the braces, owing to the constant chafing, wore away very rapidly. After two or three weeks, they would be worn out and useless.

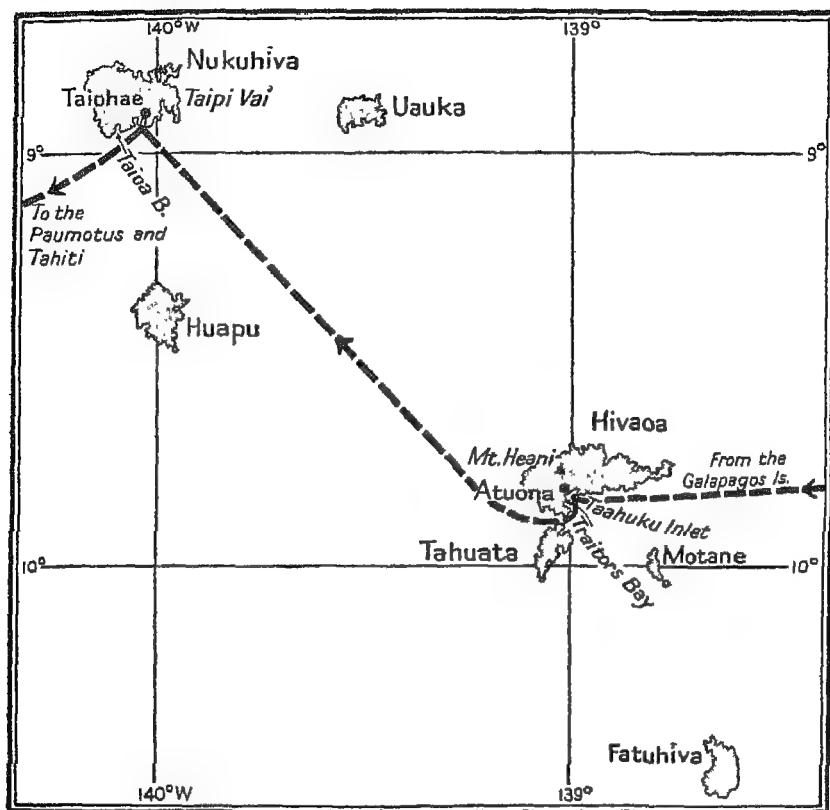
From January 8th until our arrival at the Marquesas, storms with distant thunder and lightning occurred and we ran into a few squalls. On the 9th, we saw numbers of birds all day, a sign that land was near. I reckoned another two days. On the 10th, there was an impressive thunderstorm. We set the mainsail for the day to add to our speed so that our landfall should not be made too late on the next day.

An excellent observation taken at sunset gave me very accurately my position. With the coming of daylight, land would be in sight. I arranged our schedule of watches so that a constant look out could be kept.

January 11th. I had given myself the last watch of the night. The dawn, very fleeting in the tropics, came. I was somewhat impatient. The land must be there ahead: why couldn't I see it?

5.45 a.m. Land straight ahead, in a haze of mist, glistening in the splendour of the morning. There it was: Hivaoa.

The Marquesas. The dream I had cherished for years had now become reality. I recalled the lines written by Stevenson when, in 1888, he had first clapped eyes on these same Marquesas from the bridge of his small schooner *Casco*: 'Few men who come to the islands leave them; they grow grey where they alighted; the palm



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shades and the trade wind fans them till they die, perhaps cherishing to the last the fancy of a visit home, which is rarely made, more rarely enjoyed, and yet more rarely repeated. No part of the world exerts the same attractive power upon the visitor. . . . The first experience can never be repeated. The first love, the first sunrise, the first South Sea island, are memories apart and touched a virginity of sense.'

At 9.05 a.m., I took in the two staysails, keeping the third jib set, to tidy the deck before setting the mainsail at 10 a.m. I intended anchoring in the Taahuku inlet of Traitors' Bay. We passed close under Cape Balguerie or Matafenua, which is the end of the mountainous ridge that comes to an abrupt termination in the sea; then we followed a coastline that was covered with dense vegetation. The mountain, the valleys, the greenness, the sea—all combined to form a majestic spectacle which our month at sea made all the more impressive. No, the Marquesas were not inferior to what I had imagined them to be.

Before long, I was able to identify the islet of Hanake, which the Nautical Instructions contend is not easily distinguished. Then *Kurun* entered Traitors' Bay, Vipaihai, dominated by the steep peak of Heani, the highest point of the island. Suddenly, in the midst of all the verdure, I espied the narrow, deep channel of Taahuku. The cutter pivoted almost at right angles as I passed very close—a little too close—under Flat Point, where the breakers were thundering.

A moment later, *Kurun* was immobilized in the calm created by the high banks; I had to scull her to the end of the inlet.

At 2.18 p.m., the anchor dropped to the sandy bottom, in four and a half fathoms of water; near us was a small motor-launch which later I heard belonged to the Bishop.

While the stowing the mainsail, I enjoyed gazing around me. It was like being on an enchanted lake. On all sides, the calm water was surrounded by a green undergrowth above which rose the coco-palms. Near the entrance of the inlet, the sharp bend of Traitors' Bay formed a spur of land that concealed the open sea.

At the far end of the inlet was a small beach of black sand, into which ran two rivers. Some outrigger canoes with natives on board lay idle. On the beach, standing in the water, were some fishermen. A serene quietude hung over the scene.

NO NYMPHS TO GREET US

The arrival of a small cutter, even if she came from the moon, had no power to disturb the peace of these islands and their inhabitants. Navigators of the past chronicle that upon their arrival a fleet of canoes came out and that graceful girls swam out to welcome them. But how many canoes are there left in the whole archipelago of the Marquesas? And as for the water-nymphs—if there are any of them left, they must have seen enough white men by now.

Nevertheless, one canoe, with fishermen aboard, gradually drew closer to us: not attracted by *Kurun* herself, however. One of the men, a fine, muscular fellow, had his eyes riveted on a large dried tunny-fish which I had caught a while back and which now hung from the awning rail. I surmised that he was tempted by it, and offered it to him, secretly amused at making such a gift to one of the 'Argonauts of the Pacific' as they have been called. It was a curious incident—for the water abounded in fish.

In spite of the allurement of this Promised Land, there were a number of duties to be performed before we could go ashore; put away the sails, cover the mainsail, unreeve the halyards and stow them away and rig the awning, which is indispensable when at anchor in the tropics, not only to make life on board bearable but also to protect the deck.

A man shouted from the shore that the gendarme would like to see us. In the pram, we sculled over to the left side of the beach as the best place to land. On the rocks, a dozen or so feet from the water's edge, were two young girls, bubbling over with laughter, fishing with bamboo rods and little white feathers which they made bob on the surface of the water as bait. I asked them in joke about the dangers of landing. We hauled the pram ashore near the pellucid river, to the accompaniment of the girls' trills of mirth and cries of *kaaha*, hallo!—our first contact with the Marquesas.

I kept the laughter going with a string of silly questions about the islands as we walked toward Atuona, the young girls, who had at first gone ahead, now following us. They walked slowly, very very slowly, and putting on such amusing little airs that I could not help laughing. They were the daughters of the Chief of Atuona: Caroline, eighteen, and Rebecca, sixteen. I preferred their native names which seemed to suit them much better: Taua, i.e. heathen priestess, and Titihina, the moon-goddess. They were

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both tall and of a surprisingly delicate beauty. I had thought of Polynesian girls as fat and gross, but then I recalled the statement of Radiguet: 'The much vaunted Tahitian women are heavy, thick, brown and rustic compared with the sprightly girls of Nukuhiva.' And Cook, the navigator, I found, had written that they were 'the finest race in the Pacific, perhaps surpassing all other nations'.

Titihina had cat's eyes, green and brilliant. There must have been a drop of French blood coursing through the girl's veins—if of no other blend! Where is the true Polynesian type to be found—if anywhere? Was Gerbault joking when he declared that he would not wish to have a child by a Polynesian woman because he would scruple to defile so beautiful a race?

The road to Atuona is a lovely path, lost in an exuberance of foliage, running high above the inlet in a hairpin bend round the promontory that separates the inlet from Atuona beach. It affords a delightful walk, with occasional views of the inlet or the bay that are both fine and varied.

Without haste we absorbed the charm of the island, and at last arrived at the gendarmerie's. In these islands, the gendarme is all-powerful, but the picture that is often given of these Oceanian gendarmes is far too severe. In actual fact, their function is exceedingly complex. To take a French gendarme from France and transplant him to an island, making him the supreme chief who fulfils the functions of mayor, notary, judge and chief of police, is no simple matter. What I saw of them showed them as intelligent, understanding and just men.

The gendarme of Atuano, big boss of Hivaoa, M. Roques, is a Meridional with an open, genial character; he had arrived a few months earlier with his wife and their small daughter Jacqueline. They were expecting us, for *Fleur d'Océan* had told them of our plans.

We also called on Dr. Boutonnet, the physician of the Marquesas, who lived on Atuona with his beautiful Tahitian *vahine*. He gave us champagne to celebrate our arrival.

Our stay at Taahuku was an enchantment. The valley is superb and silent; through it runs a river of lovely, limpid water. Dense coco-nut groves fill the lower end of the valley, going right down to the beach—they constitute wealth. The valley belongs to two

'A DYING RACE'

Frenchmen who have been out there for a long time: M. le Bronnec, a Breton who has lived there for some forty years, and M. Rouzy, who has been there eighteen years.

The atmosphere at Taahuku is peaceful, homely and cordial. Apart from the homes of these two land-owning families, the valley contains two or three huts belonging to the native families who work on the plantation, for the trees and their produce do demand a certain labour: the shrub must be kept down and the trees have to be protected from rats by means of zinc sheaths.

Atuona is the religious centre of the archipelago; the faith is Roman Catholic. The Bishop resides there and we called on him. Mgr. Le Cadre has lived in the Marquesas for fifty years. While we were still in the islands, the French Government sent a small naval vessel to present him with the Légion d'Honneur in celebration of his jubilee. A Breton from Questembert, Mgr. Le Cadre, like most missionaries, rarely returned to France. He was a good man with a ready smile, and was devoted to his flock. When we visited him, he brought out some excellent wine and talked to us in a most fatherly way.

The missionaries in Oceania have sometimes been reproached for having destroyed the old Polynesian civilization—customs, ways of life, folklore and character—without having succeeded in replacing these with a Christianity that compensates for the Polynesian loss, thus creating an unbalanced condition. That accusation may be true, but it cannot be denied that the present influence exerted by religion is beneficent. And as the Europeans have come to stay, it may be as well that they have brought their morality and religion with them.

Again, can a Polynesian civilization be said to have existed before the advent of the Europeans? Polynesian civilization must have been the residue of a variety of previous civilizations introduced into the islands by successive waves of migration.

There is no trace left of 'primitive' life in French Oceania, nor is there a vestige of the past. The folklore of the French provinces is infinitely richer and more vital than that of these islands. From this point of view, a visit to the archipelago tends to be disappointing. The root of the trouble is that nothing seems to rouse the interest of the modern Polynesian. As Gerbault put it, 'It is a dying race.'

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Quantitatively, however, the factors of the problem seem to have changed in recent years. The native population, which alarmingly decreased in number after the arrival of the Europeans, is now increasing again. During my stay, I was impressed by the general good health of the natives; it was considerably better than I had been led to expect.

In the Marquesas, there is only a faded memory of things past; the natives certainly take no interest in them. Their own history is a matter of indifference to them. It attracts only a few specialists who do not belong to their race.

According to the legend, the islands were peopled by Maoris from the islands of Tonga and Samoa who came in large canoes. Specialised studies have adduced a number of reasons, based on precise facts, demonstrating that the Oceanic Islands were peopled from west to east. Thor Heyerdahl's attempt to prove the contrary by his spectacular crossing on his raft *Kon-Tiki* is well-known, but his hypothesis has been disproved, in particular by the scholar Alfred Métraux.

At Tahiti I learned that the famous Eric de Bisschop had intended making a similar demonstration on a bamboo raft, but in the opposite direction, from west to east, a much more hazardous expedition. Unfortunately, it is unlikely that this experiment will be made in view of the advanced years of the promoter, though he is still very active for his age.

In earlier times, the Marquesas were densely populated and there are still many relics to be found, mainly the *paepae*, or stone platforms, and a few *tohua* or public squares. Everything that could be moved, however, has been taken away, and if there are still some fine stone *tikis* left, it is only because they were too heavy for the looters to carry off either in the name of art or science or just from plain greed. Most of the smaller examples of this exotic art are now to be found only in distant museums or in large private collections.

One day, M. Le Bronnec and M. Rouzy took us to the far end of the Taahuku valley. We were shown, beneath their shroud of luxuriant vegetation, the *paepae* of Hopeta, consisting of three stone platforms of remarkable construction. With some difficulty we also found in that valley, hidden even deeper in the undergrowth, the inscribed stone of Tehueto. It is covered with symbolic signs,

A FRIENDLY PEOPLE

of which several interpretations were given us. The stone, its site overlooking the bed of an ancient river, may have been the scene of human sacrifices, for these were prevalent in the Marquesas until the end of the last century. Such sacrifices were the occasion for cannibal festivities, for, apart from their ritual aspect, the sacrifices provided the highly esteemed dish known as 'long pig'.

At the bottom of the valley, we made the acquaintance of certain small mosquitoes called *nonos*, which are of a peculiarly malignant and aggressive kind.

At Hivaoa, I was struck by the utter lack of interest shown in the sea by the natives. They have very few proas. Fishing in these waters could be extremely lucrative, but all the natives do is to fish along the beaches and in the bays. Hahatai, their god of fisheries, seems, like Meotai, the god of long voyages, to have died.

Yet at Taahuku, there is always someone fishing. Girls spend whole days on rocks or in canoes or in the water of the foreshore with their *pareo*. The bay teems with crayfish and, as in the Galapagos, they are caught by hand. One day, the elder son of Le Bronnec went diving for them and filled the whole bottom of his canoe. All the village shared in his catch, and he very kindly brought us some.

It is this simplicity, this friendly gentleness and kindness, that makes the people of the Marquesas so attractive. It was very pleasant living there. Morals are very simple. Girls come to wash clothes on the river bank and bathe in a state of stark nudity. No one dreams of being shocked, but they are shocked if special attention is paid to them. I was to hear of the severe punishment inflicted on a Tahitian photographer who came to the valley to take photographs to sell to the tourists. The Polynesians are the cleanest people in existence, and spend a considerable portion of the day in bathing and seeing to their personal cleanliness. I liked chatting and joking with them. Their laughter was always ready and light-hearted.

The girls took pleasure in putting fruit or fish in the pram which we had beached at the top of the sands and covered with palm fronds for shade, as is the custom of the land. When we returned to the shore, we would discover these small gifts and hear the laughter of the givers. The daughters of Le Bronnec, with the

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skilfulness of their mother's race, plaited us some magnificent hats of pandanus leaves.

Atuona inevitably calls up memories of Gauguin who died there in 1903. His tomb in the small cemetery overlooks the village and faces the sea in the majestic and placid framework of Traitors' Bay. The Bishop had known him well and frequently talked to us about him.

There were two motor-cars at Hivaoa, but their scope was limited to the short road between Atuona and Taahuku. Popular entertainments were few at Atuona. The young played football, and it seems that this sport, on which Gerbault was so keen, is very popular. There are occasional dances, but these are infrequent and all balls are subject to the gendarme's approval. The dancing is modern and Western and shows no originality; those who attend the dances wear European clothes. On rare occasions, there are more colourful displays, usually to celebrate some festivity: on July 14th, for instance, at Tahiti, the inhabitants of the surrounding archipelagos enter for various competitions, involving months of preparation. On a number of evenings, we watched them practising the so-called Tahitian dances and songs by the light of the *morigaz*, the pressure lamps of American make which are popular and are now in general use throughout the islands.

The drinking of wine is prohibited, or rather controlled, in the Marquesas. During the war, both French and natives were rationed, and it is held that if the natives could obtain all the alcoholic liquor they wanted, they would indulge in it too freely; but the law is circumvented by the fermentation of coco-nut milk which produces a strong drink harmful to the system.

The cost of living is high at Tahiti and even higher in the Marquesas, where all the goods are landed by schooners and have certain percentages added to the price, an arrangement that leads to abuses from which only a few profit and which give rise to considerable discontent.

When we arrived at Taahuku, I had noticed a whaler drawn ashore at the head of the beach and covered with a shelter of branches. I was surprised to learn that she was a derelict and went closer to read her name, *Kroja*. I knew that a boat of that name had called at Panama some time before our arrival there. Her owner, a Dutchman, Ernst Wilhelm Lamberty, had equipped this whaler

A DISAPPOINTMENT

with a ketch rig for a long voyage, and had left Amsterdam, bound for the Pacific, on his own. Lamberty had fallen under the spell of the islands. Badly anchored (we had taken the precaution of anchoring rather far out and on two anchors), *Kroja* was cast ashore and was badly stove in. It proved almost impossible to repair her, and she was left to her fate. But if he had lost his boat, he had gained a pretty wife, and returned to the islands later, in 1952, in another sailing boat.

Taahuku is visited only by the schooners; yachts drop in very infrequently. While we were there, *Stella Polaris* was expected, and I was amused to think of the arrival of that large luxury yacht, built for millionaire tourists. We were having lunch at Atuona when she was signalled; by the time we arrived at Black Point, she had already gone. Her captain had decided that the swell was too heavy to allow him to disembark his precious luxury passengers. The natives were disappointed, for they had organized dances and a special reception.

We often saw, at Taahuku, the whaler from Taahuata, the neighbouring island to Hivaoa; between the two islands lies only the Canal du Bordelais, a channel no more than two miles wide. Why have the natives abandoned the canoe for the whaler? I wonder. There are a number of very large whalers in the archipelago, especially designed for crossing from island to island. Not long before my visit, one of them had capsized near Huapu and several of the men on board had been drowned or eaten by sharks. The boats are usually skilfully built by the natives. In spite of their indolence, the Marquesans are clever craftsmen.

The rivers teem with *chevettes*, a kind of large fresh water prawn (not a kind of crayfish, as has been stated). They are delicious to eat, and the Marquesans catch them in a most original fashion—with a minute harpoon which they manipulate with amazing skill, fascinating to watch. Sometimes they catch the prawns in a cloth in which they lift them out of the water.

There is no butcher's shop at Atuona. Meat is provided by Puaka, the hunter. Every week, Puaka sets out to the interior of the island, where the wild oxen thrive in the uninhabited region. The gendarme provided me with a shooting licence, so that I was able to accompany Puaka on several of his expeditions, together with the doctor.

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Puaka means pig. The man's real name is Teikivahitini. His mother gave him his nickname when she heard his first cry—similar nicknames are common on the islands.

Puaka is not very tall, but he is enormously strong. As a hunter, he is indefatigable, but his weakness is drink. Time and time again, I came upon him dead-drunk, lying by the side of the path or astride his horse, which, being used to his ways, would take him home, sometimes over long distances. Let it be added to his credit that he was never drunk on the eve of a hunting expedition, in which he showed a strength of character unusual in a native.

A hunt meant trekking for miles across the mountains, setting off on horseback and dismounting and following on foot when a bull was sighted and the dogs were unleashed. It was backbreaking work, perpetually having to crash one's way through the undergrowth, the wild coffee shrubs, the clumps of giant bamboo, and having to cross streams and clamber over rocks. I found it hard going to keep up with the tough little hunter.

The moment we were on a trail, Puaka was transformed, his vast latent energy released. Though the wild bull is in no way comparable to the great carnivores, yet its charge is dangerous and presence of mind is needed for accurate marksmanship. As the cows must never be killed, complications arise, for when a herd is being trailed, the cows are as likely to charge as the bulls, and on no account must they be fired at. The best course on these occasions is to shin up the nearest tree.

Puaka had an old Winchester rifle, dating from last century. His ammunition was of an altogether different calibre. How he achieved any kind of marksmanship at all baffled me. He let me use my Mauser which achieved results. The killed bull was quartered on the spot, and the sides of beef, wrapped in sacking, were loaded on to the horses. I admired his skill as he dealt with the carcase. That task finished, he quickly cut some bark off a *bouras* in lieu of string to suspend the meat and let the blood trickle out of it.

If we were thirsty and came to a river, a couple of blows with his hatchet fashioned a fine bamboo drinking cup; or he would climb up a coco-palm with unbelievable rapidity; that was in the lowlands, for the coco-palms do not grow in the higher regions.

These hunts were delightful expeditions to the heart of the

TIME TO LEAVE

island. Only once did we go down the other side, into the valley of Hanaiaapa.

What strikes the traveller most in Marquesan country is the silence. Not a rustle. Apart from the oxen, pigs and goats or an occasional wild dog, the fauna is practically non-existent; one can linger in a region for days on end without seeing a single animal. The mountain scenery is splendidly wild; the tracks along which one gallops on horseback at times border on precipices. The Marquesan saddle is made of wood; some of them are works of art from the carver's point of view; most are cruelly uncomfortable.

Time at Taahuku flowed by as smoothly as the little river with its clear water ran under the foliage. My stay of three weeks on the island passed like a dream. Entertained by everybody, we needed courage to tear ourselves away.

February 1st. I had decided to set out early in the afternoon in order to arrive the next day, during the hours of daylight, at Taiohae on the island of Nukuhiva, a hundred miles away. At Nukuhiva, there had been a serious accident; a native had fallen out of a coco-palm and had broken both his legs. It was decided that Dr. Boutonnet should come with me to the island in *Kurun*.

The cutter was loaded with fresh fruit of all kinds, provided by our generous friends, sometimes by the grateful: pineapples, grapefruit, bananas, mangoes, avocado pears.

The Roques had insisted on inviting us to lunch ashore with them for our last midday meal, and Titihina accompanied us back on board. I liked talking to her, and teasing her. She was a timid, sweet-natured girl, brimming with laughter, and she was afraid of staying too long. 'Daddy would scold me,' she pleaded. I rowed her ashore and took back the crew. At 6 p.m. we sailed.

The fine afternoon breeze had dropped and I had to scull *Kurun* out of the inlet. As if regretfully, she drew slowly away from the black sands. It took me twenty-five minutes to get out of Taahuku Bay. A slight land breeze allowed me to take my oar in. Night had fallen and the boat glided imperceptibly over the smooth surface of Traitors' Bay. In the dusk, the island appeared as a huge dark mass. A gleam of light, rather like that of a pocket torch, indicated that the 'lighthouse' of Black Point was working. Taahuku was fading to a memory in the sweetness of a night that was eerie enough for the *tupapaus*, the spirits of the dead, to be abroad.

THE MARQUESAS

Not before 8.30 p.m. did we pass within a third of a mile of Tcachoa Point, at the far end of Traitors' Bay. Then, passing between the sombre masses of Hivaoa and Tahuata, *Kurun* entered the Canal du Bordelais—and lay becalmed in the finest South Sea night I had yet experienced. The sky was scintillating. Fish leapt out of the still water. A delicate fragrance rose from the slumbering land. Far to the east, by my reckoning, lay Point Kiu Kiu. There, in the past, the spirits of the dead would come in their canoes on their way to the nether regions. Where were they bound, these days?

Happy to be alive, I lay dozing on deck.

By 4.30 a.m., a gentle breeze rose in the north-north-east, enabling the cutter to get going. The day promised to be fine. There were cumuli. And sailing was a pleasure.

After we had passed Huapu and Uauka, the island of Nukuhiva rose clearly visible ahead, but to reach it that day was out of the question. We drew near the coast and the doctor began to talk of fishing. I was just saying, 'The betting is that we wouldn't catch a thing,' when the line we were trailing, and which had only just been paid out, tautened. Hardly had I put my hand to it before it snapped like a thread. Yet it had been a stout line. A large tunny-fish? A shark?

Before nightfall I identified the vertical arm of the trachyte cross, rising a thousand feet above the sea, east of the Bay of Taiohae. Then utter darkness enveloped us, but I kept carefully to my course so that at 8 p.m. we found the mouth of the dark, deep bay by the light of the morigaz lamps on the fishermen's canoes. Not a sign of the lighthouse of Fort Collet, which is supposed to indicate the far end of the bay. Later I was to find that not only was it of the pocket torch variety but that it had a white light instead of a red one.

Avaling myself of an occasional breath of wind, I managed to take *Kurun* right down the bay and at 9.30 we anchored to the west-north-west of the fort, near the small ketch *Nuu Hiva*.

The next morning revealed to our eyes the majestic spectacle of the Bay of Taiohae, a vast amphitheatre, protected on all sides by high mountains. The bay itself forms a long regular U lying due north-south. Two high rocks, the Sentinels, keep guard on either side of the entrance and the far end of the bay is edged with a fine

THE GREAT BAY OF TAIOHAE

beach of white sand. Taiohae has the reputation of being the finest anchorage in the whole archipelago; it is large enough to harbour a squadron and the small *Kurun* was quite lost in it.

Contrary to the general taste, I preferred the wilder beauty of Traitors' Bay and the intimacy of Taahuku Cove. All the same, our stay at Taiohae, which lasted nine days, was very pleasant.

Of all the islands of the archipelago, Nukuhiva has the closest contact with civilization. For some time, there had been a resident administrator at Nukuhiva and before him a doctor who had acted as administrator.

While we were at Taahuku, Le Bronnec had talked to us of his friend Bob, 'Bob the Trader', an original character who had lived on Taiohae for some thirty-nine years. Bob's surname was MacKittrick. He had left Europe as a sailor but had abandoned that calling to settle in the islands; at heart, however, he had remained a sailor and sailing was his hobby-horse. We were soon firm friends. He had known many a famous sailor, including Gerbault and Harry Pidgeon. He himself owned several small sailing boats and was thinking of building himself a new one.

At the foot of Fort Collet—or of what is left of it—*Kurun* anchored beside *Nuu Hiva*. This small ketch, formerly a pleasure yacht, had been bought from an American at Tahiti and was now the boat of the administration. The way in which *Nuu Hiva* came to the Marquesas is worth recording, for it shows the sort of thing that may happen there. She had left Papeete for the archipelago seven hundred and fifty miles to the north-east. Three months later, someone came across her at Bellinghausen, an atoll three hundred and ten miles to the north-west. . . . Such a misfortune was often suffered by the rovers of the South Seas!

The captain of *Nuu Hiva* was called Doum; he was not on board on that occasion. As we were now near neighbours, we frequently called on each other. He was a very pleasant companion.

I admired some of the proas at Taiohae and there, for the first time in my life, I saw a proa equipped with an outboard engine. An auxiliary engine on an outrigger canoe struck me as an abominable innovation.

It was possible to bathe near the boat, which we enjoyed, and I also liked walking along the foreshore picking up sea-shells. Along the east coast, the coastline consists of a rocky platform over which

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the rocks jut, making it like an elongated entrance to a cave. As I was walking along it once, thinking of what the Marquesas must have been like in the past, I walked slap into an overhanging rock. Were the ancient gods jealous of their past?

Taiohae is rich in relics of the past: *tohuas*, *meaes* and sacrificial stones, all clear signs of an intensive life in days gone by, and all now covered by the encroaching vegetation.

The idea many people have formed about the Marquesas is due largely to the charming picture of them drawn by Herman Melville in his famous *Typee*. I was eager to see Taipi Vai, not so much to check the accuracy of the description of it given by the writer as to enjoy the beauty of a remarkable scene.

Had there been more time, I should certainly have taken *Kurun* into the magnificent Comptroller Bay, a bay many times larger even than the vast Taiohae Bay. During both world wars, it was used as a naval coaling station: Admiral von Spee bunkered there in the First World War; in the Second, the *Queen Elizabeth* and the *Monterey* called there to replenish their oil tanks.

We decided we would rather go for a ride with Dr. Boutonnet, who was a keen horseman. We first climbed the mountain that rises as the background to Taiohae Bay along a pretty, irregular path. From above, the bay was a gorgeous spectacle. Then we went for a long gallop across the desert plateau, whence we could see the silvery threads of the waterfalls, some of which are famous. One of them, the highest in the world I was told, falls about 1,175 feet. The only living creatures we met were some wild horses.

After our gallop, we descended into the rich historic valley where the many relics of the past attest the fullness of the native life in former times. A few years ago, there were no more than twenty natives left. Now their numbers have risen again to about two hundred. The increase is due to their intermarriage with Chinese. The Polynesian race, indeed!

We met a missionary busily engaged on the building of his new chapel. He had no illusions that his parishioners would experience a spiritual revival; he had resigned himself to the conviction that it was impossible to interest them in anything whatsoever.

We visited the *paepae* of Vaitavii in the *meae*, the tabu sites, of Paeke. These are unique in the Marquesas; their façades are

A LONG RIDE

ornamented with eight splendid stone *tikis* which are so heavy that no one has yet succeeded in stealing them. Blessed be their weight!

In such places as these, one begins to feel the atmosphere of the old Marquesas; for myself, I am quite ready to believe that spirits roam there at night.

Another long, intoxicating gallop, and we came back to Taiohae just as night was falling.

CHAPTER XII

TAHITI—THE OCEANIC LEEWARD ISLES

ON Sunday, February 11th, *Kurun* left the Marquesas for Tahiti. At 6.40 a.m., as we weighed anchor, it was calm. To leave the bay, *Kurun* had to be sculled all the way, an early morning exercise that I could well have dispensed with, but we had woken up too late for the land breeze that drops with daylight.

At Pointe Arquée, a few insignificant gusts allowed us to make a pretence of sailing. It was little more than a pretence, for *Kurun* might just as well not have had a rudder. Not before 10 a.m. were we able to round the Sentinels at the mouth of the bay. A motor-boat would have been out of that anchorage in a few minutes; it had taken us several hours and had raised some large blisters. Our consolation was that we had not disturbed the harmony of the scene with a noisy engine.

Gradually the wind rose in the east-south-east, to back east by midday and north-east by sunset. The weather continued fine, with cumuli—ladies' weather. Nukuhiva looked beautiful as I imprinted the picture of the bay on my memory with a last lingering survey of its grand, savage splendour. In the afternoon we had the island of Huapu on the beam, its craggy peaks giving it a fantastic aspect, forbidding in its wild solitude.

At 6 p.m., Nukuhiva, which had been growing progressively flatter, sank below the horizon and soon afterwards Huapu dissolved in a dream-like twilight. That was the last of the Marquesas; they were already a nostalgic memory.

Apart from some minor squalls, a little rain and a few thunderstorms, the weather continued fine, even in the Paumotu archipelago, where navigation is often tricky. The only incident was that the rotator of the log was swallowed by a shark.

On the 12th, I again rigged a jibboom. From a walk in the valley of Taahuku I had brought back an enormous bamboo pole, light and resilient, which made an ideal spar. The cutter must have presented a proud spectacle with that formidable bowsprit jutting

TOWARDS THE DANGEROUS ISLES

out twenty feet beyond the stem. I grinned to myself, thinking of the people who had already been critical of my ordinary bowsprit, saying it was cumbersome, unaesthetic, and awkward to handle if not useless.

Now, with my No. 3 jib set at the tip of that spar, the cutter steered herself, with a gentle breeze nearly astern. Though it was properly stayed, this gear would not have held in a strong wind. Later, therefore, I worked out a system that was considerably more elegant and even more efficient and which allowed the boat to steer herself, even when quartering, with the helm working automatically.

Every evening, I took sights of the stars. Accuracy was imperative when passing through the Paumotu Archipelago for, as another of its names—Low Archipelago—indicates, its islands are flat and without clear landmarks, visible only from a mile or so away. At the same time, there are currents running between the islands and these are often of an uncertain nature. Another appellation of the archipelago is equally well deserved—the Dangerous Isles. Many ships have been lost there.

I considered the best route to be one that would take me to Ahe and then between Rangiroa and Arutua before bringing me to the open sea again. On the evening of the 15th, from an accurate observation of Sirius, Canopus and Achernar, I knew that Ahe would be within sight the next day, late in the forenoon. Climbing to the top of the mast, I expected to see the atoll, but I did not sight it before midday—or rather I did not detect its crown of coco-palms until then. At 2 p.m., we were N. 68 W. of the island, about two miles offshore.

As the reef of the atoll fell sheer into deep water, I was able to pass it within touching distance and I resisted the temptation to enter its enticing lagoon, since I had made up my mind to press on to Tahiti. We were so close to the atoll that it was almost as if we were walking on it. Unless one has actually seen the colouring of these South Sea islands, it is impossible to visualise it. Perched at the top of the mast, I was able to appreciate to the full the brilliance of the lagoon ringed round with the vividly green coco-palms.

We kept to a very strict course to pass in a straight line between

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the two next atolls. During the last watch of the night, which was mine, I woke my companion, though he had only been sleeping a short time. The night was exceedingly dark and visibility was uncertain. If a current were to sweep us off our course, we might suddenly find a coral reef looming before us, so I asked Farge to steer while I kept a sharp look out forward. It would have been stupid, with two men on board, to run risks through failing to make full use of the available man-power.

At 6.30 a.m., I recognized Rangiroa to starboard, which meant that *Kurun* had kept accurately to her course. At 7 a.m., the extreme east of the atoll—an indistinct grey line—was abeam at a distance of about six miles. We never saw Arutua.

Kurun was making excellent progress; at 6.20 p.m. I sighted Makatea to starboard. We passed it at a distance of over sixteen miles, so that it never became more than a small mass with a bluish tinge. It is said to have neither beauty nor human interest, but to be merely a source of phosphates. It has been exploited and dug over from end to end and is supposed to look like a lunar landscape. Fortunately for the other islands, they have no phosphates.

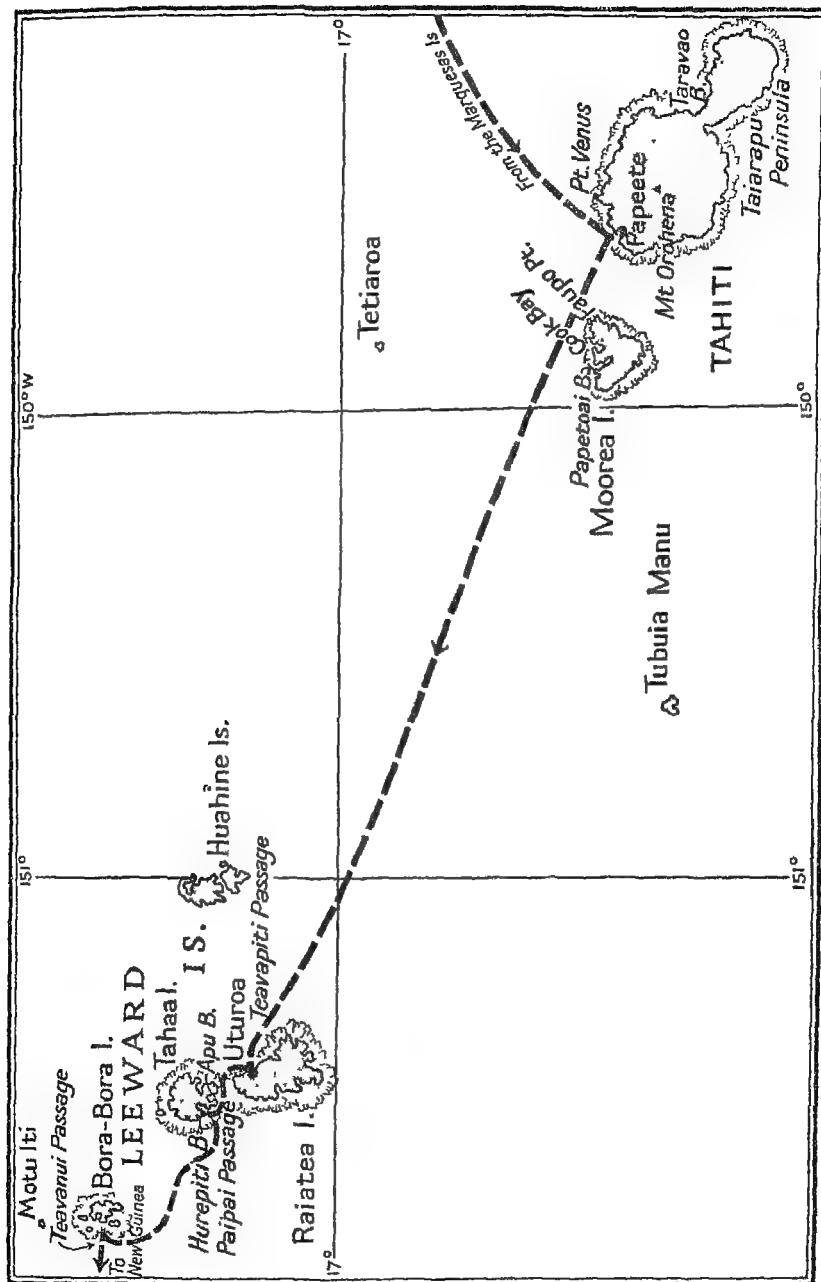
Toward the end of the following night, a motor schooner overtook us, but it took her some while to do so. A well designed and well rigged sailing vessel of the same size would have overtaken us considerably sooner. At present, however, all the schooners in the islands have engines and make very little use of sail. Admittedly, it would need a certain exertion to hoist them and keep them sheeted and the Tahitians do not like exertion.

In a fine breeze from the east-south-east, *Kurun* ran all day like a dog with a bone in its mouth. The weather continued fine, in spite of a slight haze.

11.25 a.m. On the horizon appeared a dark stain on the starboard now. Land. Soon after midday, the high peaks of Tahiti began to take on outline.

At 1.30 p.m., Moorea was in sight, the island north-west of Tahiti. As we drew nearer, a squall suddenly came down upon us. I did not feel like taking in sail. The boat heeled a little but that was all.

From the sea, Tahiti looks very beautiful and fully deserves the name of 'Queen of the South Seas' and 'Pearl of Oceania'. Although



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a trifle prejudiced against Tahiti, I could not withhold my admiration of the magnificent spectacle.

Kurun was running extremely fast, and I began to think I might make the roads by nightfall. At 7 p.m., Point Venus was already abaft the beam by at least a couple of miles. As night fell, however, the wind dropped.

We saw our first Tahitian sunset; though it was a sunset without unusual features, the beauty of the scene was impressive. A land breeze, balmy and redolent with heavy perfumes, blew caressingly round us. As I had a chart of the roads, our arrival in the dark presented no difficulties.

Suddenly we observed a light signalling. Pilot? As we drew in, we were hailed by familiar voices coming from a small craft, *Lamentin* of Robert Argod. On board were her captain, Pierre Suzanne, and Jacqueline de Broca. Another hail came from a canoe in which was my old friend Gérard de Broca. I could not have had a more delightful surprise.

All our friends came clambering on board and I took the launch and canoe in tow. Before long, however, I had to get out the oars and in the end Robert Argod cast off.

Our arrival was laborious and somewhat old-fashioned, but by 9 p.m., we were in the passage, and an hour and a quarter later *Kurun* moored along the Quai du Commerce at the far end alongside the famous schooner *Yankee*, belonging to Irving Johnson, and opposite the offices of the Compagnie des Messageries Maritimes.

In spite of the lateness of the hour, a small group of people was awaiting us. Two beautiful native girls festooned us with the traditional garlands of flowers in accordance with local custom.

The next day, I called at the harbour master's office and handed him the mail I had been officially entrusted with at the Marquesas. I was, moreover, the bearer of letters from the Galapagos to several American yachts that were calling at Papeete and of a small consignment that I had officially taken on board at Panama.

Papeete is not a fine town, but its roadstead, over which the mountain towers, is not without grandeur. Upon our arrival, I had to comply with a multitude of unexpected formalities. Even at Panama, where the Americans had been so excessively meticulous, there had been nothing like it. I had to submit a list in several copies of all the stores I had on board. My arms were seized by the

PAPEETE

customs, whereas even in occupied France I had contrived to retain them. It was only after a special appeal had been made to the Governor that they were restored to me.

Papeete, being the main harbour of French Oceania, was a centre of constant activity. The picturesque schooners that are used to maintain connections between the various French possessions were most imposing; their principal cargo is copra.

Tahiti is used by a fairly large number of yachts, the Americans in particular displaying a predilection for the South Seas and the French islands.

I saw the small three-master *California* (64 ft.) with her crew of four young men who were circumnavigating the world. *Mariachi*, a ketch (38 ft.) with an auxiliary engine was manned by a young couple with a boy of seven; they were finishing a cruise of three and a half years in the Pacific.

At the beginning of our stay, *Kurun* was a near neighbour of the fine topsail schooner, *Yankee*, a boat of about a hundred feet.

On March 2nd, a motor vessel arrived and took the place of *Yankee*, which had left a few days before, alongside *Kurun*. She was that fine ketch *Ho-Ho II* (55 ft. 2 in.) of the Royal Norwegian Yacht Club; I had seen her before in the Galapagos. The crew was an extremely pleasant family: B. J. Bryhn, his wife, their daughter Marja, aged twenty, their son Sigurd, aged seven, and a friend, Captain Carl Krafft. Their ship was comfortably fitted, a veritable floating house. The daughter even had a weaving loom in her cabin.

Bryhn was a sailor through and through, and it was a pleasure to hear him talk of his world cruise with two friends in the first *Ho-Ho* (39 ft.), a magnificent cutter designed by Colin Archer. That cruise had lasted four years. They had left Norway in winter and returned in winter after crossing the North Atlantic with New York as their point of departure. Far to the south of the Cape of Good Hope, the *Ho-Ho* had capsized, fortunately without sustaining any damage. Later she was cast ashore on Norfolk Island and this time she was stove in. I was shown a series of eloquent photographs of these incidents. With their own hands, the Norwegians had repaired their ship and were able to continue their voyage eleven months later.

Kurun had yet another neighbour, the 40 ft. cutter *Manzanita*,

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belonging to the singlehanded navigator Lee. He was an American and I liked him at sight: a straightforward, reticent young man. He had saved enough money while salmon fishing off the American Pacific coast to buy an old boat secondhand, and one day he had set out without any definite plans just for the pleasure of living a life of freedom.

The explanations he gave me of his method of navigation were fantastic. A plain fisherman, he was utterly ignorant of precise astronomical navigation. He had made the crossing from Acapulco in Mexico to the Marquesas in thirty-nine days, which was more than laudable. His chart covered only a very small part of the eastern Pacific, but that did not worry him. He used Mercator's lines and by simply shifting the numbers of the meridians, he was able to carry on.

Lee kept no log. All he did was to write in his Nautical Almanac some cabalistic signs which only he could decipher. One sign meant 'strong winds and squalls today'; another 'caught a tunny-fish'. They were good enough for him, which was all that mattered.

On April 28th, with the first light of dawn, *Manzanita* left under her auxiliary engine in a flat calm bound for Pago-Pago in the Samoan archipelago, a voyage of some twelve hundred and fifty miles. His departure was affecting by its very simplicity. No flowers, no friends. I watched Lee as he manoeuvred with his calm, precise movements, entirely sure of himself. I was the only person to say goodbye to him that morning and I followed his small white sail for a long time as it stood out against the dark mass of Moorea.

Upon arrival at Tahiti, I had looked forward to meeting W. A. Robinson, but I was to be sadly disappointed. I had admired his luxurious schooner *Varua*, anchored in the roads. Meeting him one day, I was bold enough to say how much I should enjoy visiting his ship. He replied that he had no time to spare for me.

By habit, the natives of Tahiti are called Polynesians. The majority of them are of mixed race, in which the Polynesian element is like the gin in the cocktail. The various crossings have produced a number of physical types that are in the main good-looking. Morally, the various types are still more alike, and it is morally rather than in any other way that a Tahitian type can be distinguished.

GOODBYE TO FARGE

Tahiti has little reason to be envious of the progress of the mother-country: it has sports grounds and bicycle races. The cinema is an integral part of life and every American film is received with rapture. There are night clubs, a Radio Tahiti, and politics.

The population tends to fluctuate: it numbers a fair proportion of Government officials and a mixed bag of extremely colourful business men, travellers, adventurers, artists, eccentrics, invalids and misfits. Seen objectively, the Chinese form the most industrious group in the island. They are hard workers, they persevere, and do not shirk effort. Their word can be relied upon.

Much has been said and written about the laxity of morals on Tahiti. I cannot say that there seems to be much more licentiousness on Tahiti than in Paris, for instance. On the whole, the morals of Tahiti seem to me rather more natural.

As we had agreed at Panama, Farge and I here parted company. It was a great relief to me to be alone again. I pondered on the mistakes I had made at the outset of my cruise, and came to the conclusion that all blame rested with me. Farge's constant presence had fatigued and irritated me. Now I should be able to achieve more balance and order in my way of life. I had had enough of shared solitude and it was a profound joy to have myself once more as sole company.

I had many requests from people wishing to take Farge's place. I turned them all down. To continue my voyage alone presented no problem; my original intention had been to do it all on my own. Farge's undeniable gifts as a general handyman, as a cook, and as a relief at the helm, had made his company very useful to me for about a third of the voyage, but my original plan had been conceived on the basis of my self-sufficiency. And though Farge had learned a certain amount during his travels, he was not at heart a sailor.

Taking everything into consideration, I have retained pleasant memories of Tahiti, where I made excellent friends. I also met Bengt Danielsson who had taken part in the Kon-Tiki expedition. The giant Swede struck me as an eminently likeable fellow.

Tahiti would seem to be the ideal place for yachting, but there

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is hardly a yacht to be found there. There is admittedly a 'Yacht Club', but it is a bar.

I went on some excursions on the island. Its wonderful coastline is spoilt by a tarred road that encircles the island and along which American cars and coaches speed. Only Taiarepu peninsula has managed to resist the all-invading modernism.

The one beautiful and inviolable entity that remains is the mountain. It is entirely uninhabited and not much visited. To climb it entails effort which does not appeal to the Tahitians—fortunately, for to me its solitude lent this central point of the island its principal charm. I insisted on climbing the highest peaks. With Robert Argod and several friends, we set out for the Aorai, an expedition that lasted three days.

During my stay at Tahiti, I was forced to do several necessary tasks on board *Kurun*, for I wished to set out on my return journey to France in an impeccable boat. The route that lay before me was long, and I did not intend staying in any one place for long. Meticulously I checked every block and tackle, every inch of the rigging, and painted the hull and the pram.

I had decided to make myself a triangular sail which could be set from the masthead. I counted on using it, together with the twin staysails, when sailing before the wind, and also instead of the mainsail when running with the wind on the quarter, in order to give the boat a better balance in such circumstances.

It took a long time to make the sail. I called it my 'little Tahitian'. My 'Paimpolaise' needed a little refashioning and the alterations I had made proved very successful. My habit of calling my sails by pet names led to an amusing situation; a rumour spread that the 'solitary navigator' (me) was 'accompanied by his Paimpolaise'.

When all was done, I still lacked many of the charts for the next stages of my voyage, but even had I had money to spare, it would have been impossible to obtain them at Papeete, for the postal services at that time were appalling. Fortunately, I was able to make tracings of some which the captain of the sloop *Lotus* kindly lent me. The *Commandant Charcot*, calling in at Tahiti, solved my worst difficulty by presenting me with a chart of the Cocos-Keeling Islands, which up till then I had been unable to lay hands on.

KURUN SINKING

My main worry was the necessity of scrubbing *Kurun*. To have her beached on dry land was an operation that threatened to be too expensive for me. On May 2nd, Mr. Walker, a shipwright, kindly had my boat lifted out of the water and placed on the quay, free of charge.

I was extremely upset to find, near the waterline, a few holes made by borers. The cause of this was simple. In the Marquesas, I had scraped away some cockles adhering to the hull and in so doing must have inadvertently removed the protective layer of paint. I now scraped the underwater part of the hull; above the waterline, I had to remove all the old white paint and lay the wood bare. It was painfully hard work but it had to be done.

On May 25th, *Kurun* was launched again. Unaided the boat glided down the well-tallowed ways at a fine speed. I had no fears for the future.

I left *Kurun* to go ashore and as I stood on the quay, it struck me that she looked clumsy and heavy and seemed to be abnormally deep in the water. I hastened back on board and found the cabin planking awash, floating! The water had forced its way in through the seams which had opened in the sun, although I had protected the hull with tarpaulins and sails while I was painting. My precautions had been insufficient. There was my boat slowly sinking in the lagoon, in the full light of afternoon. People on the quay watched impassively. There was no beach or gentle slope on which to run her. It was a catastrophe: lose *Kurun*, see her sink away, masts and all in the calm depths of the roads?

Everything on board was in a state of disorder; I had not yet packed away my painting materials. I could not find the plunger of the bilge pump, and the big hand-pump, which had defective valves, put up a ludicrous performance. The water rose steadily.

Toscano, the ex-hand of *Fleur d'Océan*, who happened to be in the vicinity, came to my aid. Armed with buckets, we set to. After a while, I found the plunger of the pump and laboriously the flow was stemmed. But we had to go on pumping all night, without a break. In the fragrant darkness, perfumed with the heavy odours of the land, to the sound of guitars and the gay laughter of the carefree Tahitians, we pumped ceaselessly, in turn.

The next day, *Kurun* was making considerably less water; twenty-four hours later, the hull was once more as tight as a bottle.

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I had counted on having a good rest before leaving Tahiti, instead of which, for days on end, I had to rinse and wash everything in fresh water before I could even begin to prepare for departure.

I had had a new gaff made from a fine piece of Oregon pine which I had chosen carefully. I put on the fittings which my blacksmith of Nantes, Millot, had made for me and which had reached me just in time. Then I saw to the victualling. Before a long crossing, that is a matter which demands considerable time and attention.

Having been unable to find the proper batteries for my radio set, I bought some dozens of 1.5 volt batteries, and stored them, embedded in paraffin wax, in boxes. Those American batteries were amazing. My radio worked faultlessly until I reached France again.

I had made the acquaintance of M. Doudouze, a shipwright, who had known Alain Gerbault and had worked for him at the yard he then had at Fare Ute. He did a few small jobs for me, for which he emphatically refused any payment.

Kurun was ready. All that I now had to do was to decide when to set out.

It was time for me to leave Tahiti if I wished to be sure of crossing the Indian Ocean before the cyclone season (nor had I the slightest inclination to round the Cape of Good Hope in southern winter weather) and of arriving at Réunion not later than October 15th. As I was already a little behind schedule, I wanted, if anything, to hasten on my way. I decided to set out on June 9th.

A group of friends came to see me off and I was festooned with wreaths of flowers. One cannot leave Tahiti without this ceremony, but I felt more than a little sheepish, with my large nose peeping out of a wealth of magnificent, fragrant, red and white blossoms. My head had been crowned with red blossoms, and thus disguised as a thundergod I pulled in my pram to *Kurun* as she lay gently swaying at the end of the chain.

Just on 1 p.m., I weighed anchor. It was hard work getting it up by hand, for I was tired. I had to make the chain fast and then promptly back the jib to avoid crashing into a coral reef. *Kurun* gathered headway on the proper tack and I was able to stow the anchor in the forecastle.

A SLOW DEPARTURE

I made for the passage. Whereas a few hours earlier there had been an honest breeze, there was now hardly a breath. The roadstead of Papeete, being situated under the lee of the island, is subject to the most unpredictable conditions.

Papeete looked empty. No one on the quay, except Farge, who had come with me to take some photographs after I had called on him at his office to say goodbye. Farge was in an office now, with the Ministry of Works, an enviable job that was to his liking while the climate was excellent for his health. He was convinced that he was the lucky one, telling everybody that I should never see France again.

My colours proudly displayed, I set out alone on the long voyage that would take me round two thirds of the globe. Gently, silently, *Kurun* glided over the lightly rippling lagoon. I felt a little weary, but my eye was keen and my hand steady on the oaken tiller; my determination was as firm as a rock of granite. 'I shall take you back to the shore from which you sprang,' I whispered to my boat.

In accordance with custom, I threw my wreaths into the water, keeping only two in my cabin: one of white tiarés, and one of red hibiscus flowers.

I was sure that the light north-east breeze would take me out of the passage, but when I reached it, there was only an occasional gust of wind, mostly dead ahead. On both sides, breakers were pounding the reef, and there were interminable seconds when the cutter did not respond to the helm. I could see eddies with drifting coconuts swirling in them; yet there was not enough wind to go about. Finally, at 1.40 p.m., after a few unpleasant moments, I succeeded in getting out of the passage, to be confronted with an uncomfortably choppy sea which made any speed impossible. Laboriously I inched my way through it.

At 2 p.m., I caught the wind which was shifting to the south-west; a swell from the south was making itself felt. This time *Kurun* made some headway and I put her on her charted course. As I drew away from land, the wind shifted further to the south and began to freshen. Soon the swell became violent and crests of foam appeared on the rollers.

The weather was splendid, the sea impressive. I loved these seas now that I had grown so familiar with them. Tahiti was rising

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majestically astern and Moorea, of savage aspect, showed its profile above the port bow. This was the kind of weather that suited *Kurun*. Her powerful stem cut the green water, scattering sprays of diamonds. Six knots. If the wind did not let me down, I would make Raiatea the following night. At the helm, I ate some some of the fruit that had been given me on parting. I could look forward to a diet of bananas, oranges (from a full sack) and magnificent grapefruit. Tahitian grapefruit are particularly juicy.

At 4 p.m., my bearings showed that I had covered twelve and a half miles since I had left Papeete. I streamed the log.

All that afternoon, I contemplated the north coast of Moorea, which I had not found time to visit. Cook Bay and Papetoai Bay, so often photographed, I was not to behold at close quarters.

Night soon came. Tahiti was veiled in an unsubstantial haze, but the silhouette of Moorea remained sharp and clear and I was to see it for hours still abeam the port beam.

About 7.15 p.m., the wind freshened—south-east. Choppy sea. I spent the night at the helm. I had to wear long trousers, a woolen jersey, an old German naval jacket, and my oilskins, for it was quite cold on deck. Not having donned my oilskin trousers, my legs were soon sopping wet. I was sleepy and wanted to let the boat run herself with the new small mainsail, but my cutter was running splendidly before the *maraamu*, the south-east trade wind at six and a half knots, and in the gusts of wind as much as seven knots. *Kurun* had never done so well, and ran faster than at any time since leaving Le Croisic. From 8 p.m. to midnight, twenty-five miles; from midnight to 4 a.m., twenty-six miles; and from 4 to 8 a.m., twenty-five miles.

The sea was curling its hair and *Kurun* developed a moustache such as she had never had before.

By 2 a.m., squalls and rain. I struggled a bit with the ropes but in spite of the forbidding aspect of the night, I felt great content, running my reliable boat on my own. At moments, I realized that I was forcing the pace a little, and I admonished myself: 'This is not being serious. You must reduce speed. Do not wait until the last moment.'

With all sails set, *Kurun* was running west-north-west. I was literally falling asleep, yet I maintained my mad career all night, so happy was I to be alone with my boat.

A FAST RUN

At 6 a.m., daylight revealed that my estimate had been correct. Huahine to starboard, and dead ahead Raiatea, the erstwhile sacred island.

At 8 a.m., my observations put me at twelve miles from Teavapiti passage. I decided not to go below to make some coffee, though I felt very much in need of it.

There was both wind and sea, and the roads of Uturoa seemed less and less attractive. The chart did not give a single point for anchoring with absolute peace of mind. Deep water everywhere —a hundred and ten to a hundred and forty feet, and strong currents. That is the general drawback of roads in the South Seas, especially for a small vessel. Yet I wanted to call at the island, mainly to see my friends, the Suzannes, who were expecting me.

The south of Raiatea looked splendid. Before long I saw the reef barrier, a strip of foam beyond which stretched the jade-green expanse of the lagoon. I steered for Mount Tapioi, its flat summit looming above Uturoa, and got ready to anchor.

At ten o'clock, I was in the passage of Teavapiti, embellished with its two *motus* or islands, Tetaro and Taoru. The sea was breaking on the reefs, but the entrance was wide and deep. In twenty hours, I had covered a hundred and twenty miles, which was satisfactory.

The bottom of the lagoon was clearly visible and was remarkable for its vivid colours. The lagoon of Raiatea is said to be the finest of the entire Pacific region, after that of Bora-Bora.

Kurun shot forward like an arrow over the smooth water: a good seven knots. Rarely had I experienced such a feeling of speed in her. As I came to Uturoa, I felt like sailing straight up to the landing stage, but I changed my mind and with an impressive amount of way on turned into the wind and came to a dead stop within two cables of it. At 10.10 a.m., I dropped anchor.

I took in the sails, ate some food and then dozed. In spite of my fatigue, I slept little, and went on deck from time to time to test the cable at the end of the chain that led through the fairlead and to make sure that I was still on the same bearings.

The *maraamu* was still blowing with undiminished force, but I passed an excellent night.

The next day, I felt in considerably better form. After drinking a cup of coffee, I launched the pram, though the water was quite

THE OCEANIC LEEWARD ISLES

choppy, and went to have a close look at the landing stage. It was better, I thought, to make sure. I went ashore. Uturoa is a Chinese 'town', disappointing in its ugliness.

On arrival at an island in Oceania, one's impressions usually pass through three stages. From the sea, all is beauty. Then the main settlement proves to be horrible. And then the interior of the island is again beautiful. So it was at Tahiti, and again at Raiatea.

After a short walk through Uturoa, I had an impulsive feeling that I ought to return to my boat. Intuition? As I approached the quay, I heard a shout: 'Your boat is going.'

I rushed to the pram. Indeed, *Kurun* was rapidly moving, at times beam on to the wind. I caught up with her and jumped on board, soaked to the skin. I took in the situation at a glance. She was drifting along the axis of the channel and was in no immediate danger. Otherwise, I should have had to buoy the anchor and slip the cable, and quickly hoist sails.

Without delay, I hurled myself on the windlass. Heaving in was a long and laborious business. Painfully, the cable inched on board. Several times the pawl jumped, and I had to check the handle with my leg at the cost of some bruises. I realized that I was overtiring myself, but all that mattered was to weigh anchor, for the boat was still dragging and if the wind chose to shift a little, I should be swinging smack into a coral reef, visible to leeward. After I had slaved for more than half an hour, the anchor was weighed. Shortly after, it appeared at the end of some thirty feet of chain, and with the chain wound round the stock and arms, due to the action of the currents during the night when I was sleeping so soundly.

I set the staysail and began to beat up to windward. The pram counteracting the evolution, I missed tacking near a coral bank and immediately put the helm hard over and wore round.

The tiny motor launch of Air-Tahiti came to offer me a tow, but with its 5 h.p. that was ludicrous. Still, it helped me to go about, so that, by a joint effort, we gained on the wind. Just as we were drawing near the pier, the launch's engine stalled. That is the worst of engines: when you want them, they let you down.

I anchored straightaway and made fast to a mooring buoy for flying boats that chanced to be nearby.

Leeward Isles? I had not met so much wind before in Oceania.

RAIATEA ISLAND

Kurun stayed only four days at Raiatea, but thanks to the kindness of M. Charmay, the administrator, those four days were well employed. The gendarme took me in a jeep all along the west coast of the island.

Uturoa is a village, mainly of wooden cabins with corrugated iron roofs, yet it contains surprises—a large modern hospital, for instance, which seems in little danger of becoming overcrowded. And in strange contrast is the road lit by neon light, used by a population that still goes barefoot.

On the first evening that I spent with the administrator, the Tahitian maid, Céline, with the charming, sweet fecklessness of the islands, had completely forgotten to prepare a meal, so that my host and I prepared it ourselves informally.

Charmay is an intelligent, self-made man. One day, lunching with him, were myself, the old Dutch painter Gouwe and Pierre Suzanne, and we fell into a long discussion on the Polynesians. Charmay began by talking about the philosophy of the islanders. I said that their traditional '*Aita peapea*', 'It doesn't matter,' is not really a philosophy, for the majority of people elsewhere voice similar sentiments. The 'I couldn't care less' of the Anglo-Saxons might just as well be called a philosophy. Such an attitude is not the outcome of searching one's mind, of making an effort to understand and judge, but is rather the result of abandoning oneself to an apathy that should not be confused with wisdom. Wisdom is active, alive. Apathy is passive, dead. How can the very negation of the spirit be dubbed philosophy?

On the subject of the Tahitians, the judgment of Bougainville still holds: 'It seems that to them the least reflection is an insupportable task, that they eschew exertion of the mind even more than they eschew exertion of the body.'

Nature on Raiatea has left me with a fund of wonderful memories: the mountain, the valleys, the admirable bays. Man still has a lot to do before he can claim to have spoilt the whole of it.

Of French inhabitants there are few. I must have met nearly all of them, if not all. One of them, a technician, amused me by his originality. In the north-west corner of the island, he had built himself a house in which everything is run by electricity, generated by an artificial stream that drives a turbine. He had even installed a lift to haul visitors up to his house on the hillside. I only saw part

THE OCEANIC LEEWARD ISLES

of his domain, however, for I was in the company of a gendarme, and no gendarme was allowed to set foot on his territory. Very Jules Verne!

On Wednesdays, market day brings with it a gay animation, for people from all corners of Raiatea and Tahaa flock together. They all arrive in small craft that are so heavily laden that they look like bunches of human beings floating on the water. Portions of boat can be seen only from very near them.

On June 14th, after lunch, at 2.30 p.m., I set out for Tahaa with Pierre Suzanne on board; all sails set, the pram in tow, in the most delightful weather, and a caressing north-west wind.

Unfortunately, the wind soon dropped and it took more than three hours to cover just over four miles, beating all the way. Nevertheless, it was lovely and the lagoon was beautiful. *Aita peapea*.

We took Jacqueline Suzanne and her two small daughters on board at the south point of Tahaa and then went on to Hurepiti Bay, which, in the lee of the island, is completely sheltered. Laboriously we made it after sculling for several hours. We moored at midnight, with the stern touching the iron landing stage of the house of Roland Morillot.

Hurepiti Bay, in its splendid setting, is an ideal anchorage. I was told that Alain Gerbault was fond of it, for it embodies all the charms of the Polynesian islands. It was one of the most enchanting anchorages that *Kurun* had during the whole voyage. And, moreover, I found it very refreshing to relax among such delightful friends.

On June 19th, at 9.40 a.m., I set out again, still with Pierre Suzanne on board, and the pram in tow. The bay, on that fine morning, looked like a paradise on earth. From the far end of the valley, muted by distance, came the nostalgic notes of a *pu*, a kind of marine conch. Capricious puffs of wind from the east seemed to want *Kurun* to stay in the bay, but gently, imperceptibly, she crept down the long passage. A breeze rose from the south-east.

Paipai passage, almost opposite Hurepiti, seemed the way out of the lagoon. The sea was crashing on the reefs in enormous breakers, but though both sides looked rough, I hoped to get through without difficulty.

At 10.15 a.m., we were in the narrows. A few more minutes, and

THE CHART IS UNRELIABLE

we would be through. Then, with an eerie suddenness, we were becalmed. I was a little worried. The swell was running towards the reefs and was neutralising my sculling. Though the anchor was at hand to be dropped if necessity arose, I did not like our position at all.

Laboriously we struggled on and I heaved a deep sigh of relief, blessing the south-south-east breeze that had saved us from the clutches of the reef in the nick of time.

The crossing from Tahaa to Bora-Bora was a pleasure trip in circumstances that usually occur only in dreams. Visibility was superb. The scene was magnificent. All the Leeward Isles were simultaneously visible: Huahine, between Raiatea and Tahaa; Bora-Bora, which looks like the head of an enormous cachalot gazing up at the sky; and to the west of Bora-Bora lay Maupiti. The only island missing was the atoll Motu Iti (or Tupai), north of Bora-Bora, which is in any case so low that it is barely visible even on the clearest days.

A fine wind rose after midday and Bora-Bora grew in size as we watched it. Close in, we rounded the reef just off the island, where the swell was breaking in graceful curls before Tupua, the secondary island enclosed within the marvellous lagoon.

At 4 p.m., *Kurun* entered the passage of Teavanui. Only one passage leads into the lagoon, and that is a wide one and free from dangers, running between *motu* Ahuna and *motu* Tapu. After tacking, I anchored, at 4.50 p.m., within half a cable of the wharf of Vaitape.

The chart of this island, recent though it was, gave quite a misleading idea of the place, leading one to understand that there was plenty of water to the left of the wharf (left, that is, looking seaward). In reality, instead of water, there were some splendid coral growths. Had I arrived at night, trusting to the chart, I should have run my boat aground in all innocence. Fortunately, daylight had come to my aid. Charts of these little frequented islands must always be used with circumspection.

There is deep water by the wharf, yet it is an excellent anchorage, and Alain Gerbault used it many a time.

As soon as I had stowed the sails and made everything shipshape, we went ashore in the pram. The atoll with its silver ring of breakers on the coral reef was like an explosion of tropical verdure.

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amid the green waters of the lagoon. Bora-Bora is beautiful and one grows fond of it.

During the Second World War, it was occupied by the Americans, and nature still bears the scars of this occupation: ironwork, cement, the jetty in Fannui Bay. A road was built right round the island, but, praised be the Lord, it was not tarred.

As for the people, they perhaps show the signs of occupation even more. I was assured that one third of the children on the island owed their existence to the American forces. An outsider cannot tell. The Polynesian race!

When I called at the island, there were three Frenchmen residing there, and all three were pleasant to meet: the gendarme, the wireless operator and the artist. The gendarme was Le Houedec, a friendly Breton who had grown familiar with the Pacific during years of service; he was an intelligent and versatile man as were all the gendarmes I met on the islands. The wireless operator was a nice lad with whom I enjoyed several chats. As for the artist, he was the Breton, Michon, a kind-hearted, placid man who delighted in his life on the island with his Bora-Bora wife and his two children.

To be on Bora-Bora without thinking of Alain Gerbault is impossible. Owing to the initiative of the Yacht Club de France, his tomb stands in the square of Vaitape. It is a sober monument, embellished with a well-designed medallion showing the illustrious navigator in profile.

The attitude of Alain Gerbault has often been criticised, rightly or wrongly. He took upon himself the defence of the native cause in Oceania and certain people never forgave him for exposing the abuses on which they battened; they took their revenge in slander. On the other hand, sailors have reproached him with his lack of exactness and for errors, some of which were astounding in a sailor. True enough, Gerbault may have lacked simplicity and his was not an easy personality, but those are traits which should not be given too much importance. As Bob the Trader used to say at Taiohae, 'Alain, he was a man of iron.' And yet, Gerbault had quarrelled with Bob over a trifle. Bob, however, was a man who had served his time in the great sailing ships and he knew the sailor's trade. Tourist writers have often condemned Gerbault, but, compared with the great navigator, they were small fry, and they

ALAIN GERBAULT

could not begin to understand the problems which confronted him: the long nights at the helm, the lack of sleep, the pervading cold, the intricate manoeuvring in the blackness of the night on a moving deck, in spray and wind, fighting with sails that lacerated his hands, and in imminent danger of going overboard. Suffering, fatigue, effort, tenacity—these were the manly qualities in his life. If nothing else could be said of him, these would make him a great man. And Gerbault created a following. He inspired others to sail the seas, and many, after him, have believed in the necessity of returning to a more primitive way of life, of breaking away from the trammels of civilization.

Having mentioned the word 'primitive', I must add that there is nothing primitive about the Tahitian. He is the very opposite of primitive. In the life and thought of the true primitive, all is ritual, sacred, religious. Nothing of the sort is in the Tahitian.

I for one feel no more drawn to the flaccid indolence of the race than to the restless activity of the Occidental.

Whatever the nature of the Tahitian, the islanders were busy preparing for the 14th of July. Every night, in every district, songs and dances were being practised at great length under the banana trees and cocoa-palms. We went and watched them. In the fragrant night of the islands, the movements of the dancers were bewitching. In these dances, more than in any others, was to be seen 'the technique of erotic excitation through collective agitation'.

It was my intention to cross the whole of the western Pacific without calling at a single port, and it made my last port of call before the great crossing all the more enjoyable to me. I savoured every moment of the sweetness and the poetry of these islands before putting out to sea once more.

From the far West, beyond the setting sun, the call of my homeland returned to me:

*Ni zo bêfred
Bretoned
Bretoned tud kaled.*

We are always
Bretons:
Bretons, a hard race.

CHAPTER XIII

BORA-BORA TO NEW GUINEA

AFTER postponing my departure twice, I made up my mind irrevocably to go on Sunday, June 24th.

Pierre Suzanne invited me to go to the 'restaurant' of Vaitape; after an excellent lunch, he helped me rig the gear for the twin staysails which had been carefully stowed in the forepeak. A few natives were about, on the wharf and on board a neighbouring boat, in a state of vacant apathy. What was it to them if a small cutter was setting out on a crossing of some four thousand miles or so beyond the lagoon?

I set the mainsail and cast off forward. Like the French deep-sea sailors of olden times, I cried: 'Hoist the jib; all is paid!' Though I was not casting off old debts, I was turning my back on the land and embarking on a long run homeward.

2.30 p.m. *Kurun* began to make headway.

'At Le Croisic, a year from today!' I called to Pierre. And, indeed, we were to meet at the appointed time, though our voyages were made in opposite directions.

A flukey wind, strong enough to fill the sails, took me through the passage. At 2.55 p.m., I was out in the open sea and I streamed the log. Fine weather. Wind from the east.

The swell came at first from the north, then from astern, with huge troughs. This change of direction was due to its curling round the island, and, by the way, can be a useful phenomenon at night, being a warning of the proximity of an island that one may not be able to see.

I set my course for the southern point of Maupiti which I could see clearly.

Fine breeze. Jib boomed out on the starboard side. *Kurun* was making 5.7 knots before the wind. Westward Ho!

Delectable navigation. I was homeward bound, though with thousands of miles to cover, and fully aware that until I reached the South African mainland I should have little respite.

THE NEW MAINSAIL

I wondered whether I should ever see these islands again. By the boom rail, I stood watching Mount Pahia settling down on the horizon. At night, it vanished from sight, though the dark mass of Maupiti remained clearly visible.

After I had passed the island, I took in sail at 8.50 p.m. for a short while and lay-to so that I could tidy up generally and have something to eat.

At 10.30 p.m., I proceeded on my course under the twin staysails. So beautiful and so fragrant was the night that I could not bring myself to turn in. I stayed on deck, musing under the stars. Far astern, as on every other evening, the young people of Bora-Bora were no doubt still dancing and singing. Not until well after midnight did I light the ship's lantern and, after having carefully adjusted the automatic steering, go below to sleep.

At dawn, Maupiti was still in sight, for the wind was light. By nine o'clock, the island had at last sunk below the eastern horizon.

I made very little progress that day. The following day, there were some squalls accompanied by rain, which did not make life on board any pleasanter. In the morning I left the atoll of Mopelia some thirty miles to the south; that was where, during the First World War, the raider *Seeadler* had been destroyed—by a strong spring tide. The following night, I passed between the two atolls of Scilly and Bellingshausen. And now, for a considerable distance, I had clear water ahead.

Squalls and rain, the succeeding days. June 29th marked an innovation on board, for on that day I set my new small mainsail. It raised *Kurun*'s speed considerably, and, to my great delight, the new automatic steering device worked to perfection. Yet, it must be admitted, this new arrangement was a makeshift. The boom was not long enough to allow my small 'Tahitian' to set far enough out over the side and I had therefore had to add my long bamboo pole from Taahuku to one of the unused gaffs, a clumsy arrangement which was not easy to work. (N.B. On leaving Tahiti, the boat therefore had three gaffs: a large one for the 'Alexandrine', and two small ones for the 'Paimpolaise'.)

On June 30th, squalls and heavy rain made the wind veer as far as south-south-west, after which it shifted to the south-south-east and then south-east.

For four days on end, the wind was fresh; the boat rolled a good

BORA-BORA TO NEW GUINEA

deal and shipped some water but made splendid headway, which was what I wanted. All the same, I did not get the maximum out of her, for on the evening of the 30th, the halyard of the small 'Tahitian' parted and I had to take the sail in. The halyard had been chafing in the sheave of the mast, and that was the end of this experiment.

On July 4th, the wind dropped to velocity 4, and the sea grew less rough.

July 5th. A magnificent starlit night. I slept, but at 3.15 a.m. and at 5.40 a.m. had to go on deck to adjust the twin staysail braces, for the boat was not staying strictly on her course.

A splendid morning. The sea had subsided and I appreciated its smoothness to the full after the jolting navigation of the last few days. Unfortunately, the wind from the east was now just a little too light and it was difficult to keep *Kurun* on her course; she was repeatedly caught aback, which meant that I had to take in the staysail to put her on her course again, a laborious procedure.

At 10.45 a.m., as I was working out logarithms after taking my bearings on the sun, I heard a characteristic noise that made me prick up my ears. No doubt about it: a whale was blowing. I left my Friocourt tables and went on deck. I soon spotted the eddy which to the practised eye unmistakably denotes the presence of a whale. A few minutes later, the monster surfaced.

The water was clear and I had a perfect view of the huge cetacean. A second whale joined the first. For a longer time than I liked, they accompanied *Kurun*, prowling round her at a very short distance. I climbed the mast to see them better as they came within a few hundred feet of the boat. With their enormous tails propelling them along in slow motion, they gave an amazing display of power—very impressive! They were easily twice the length of my boat and I considered changing course to put a little more distance between us. But after a while the whales grew less curious and went off. I watched them spouting farther and farther away, until at last I could see only the geysers they blew.

Very fine weather; cumuli. In the afternoon, the wind dropped and I had to take in all sail. A day like this was a holiday: I could attend to things in the cabin, put clean sheets on the bunk, take a shower-bath, shave—a fine life! I did some sewing and other odd jobs of repair.

THE LIFE IN THE SEA

At 10.30 p.m., I set the twin staysails again and proceeded before a light north-east breeze. It was too light to allow automatic steering and I had to keep on rectifying my course. At last I was able to get some sleep. The night was resplendent with scintillating stars.

July 6th. Dead calm. The finest morning since I left Bora-Bora. Not a cloud in the sky, the merest purple line round the horizon. The scene was one of purity and grandeur combined; the silence was profound. *Kurun* gently rose and fell on a slight swell from the east.

I scanned the sea. Some way off in the wake was a shark; the water was alive with plankton, that fascinating water life, millions and countless millions of tiny translucent globules. I wondered what the small, brilliant blue-silver specks that I had so often observed were; they moved so fast, as if by magic, through the water. A kind of small transparent sea-snake swam by, rather too fast for me to see it properly. A handsome, lone fish, grey-blue, with a well-developed dorsal fin, prowled round the boat all day. I tried to catch it without success. The ocean life teemed mysteriously. It was hot, without a breath of air. In the afternoon, a whale was spouting a few cables off.

July 7th. I was expecting to see the Manua Islands that morning, the easternmost archipelago of the Samoan Islands. I reckoned that I was within forty-five miles of them, but realized that visibility, reduced by passing showers, was too poor for me to see them.

At 12.20 p.m., when I went on deck to shoot the sun (I adjusted the binnacle watch every 15° of longitude to accord with local time), I suddenly saw land in bold outline to starboard. It had a faint blue tinge: Tutuila. After I had made my observations, I took a bearing with the compass on the highest peak, which must have been Matafao. I was within forty-two miles of the shore.

At 1 p.m., the Manua Islands were in sight abaft the starboard beam, and I could see the highest peak on Tau Island. The Samoas, therefore, after thirteen days out. I felt a strong temptation to anchor there, but decided it would be unreasonable in view of the lateness of the season and the imminence of cyclones. I should like to have seen the natives, who are supposed to be of a more marked and homogeneous character than those of French Oceania. That would have to wait until another time.

BORA-BORA TO NEW GUINEA

The next morning, at dawn, Tutuila was well within sight.

At 8.15 a.m., I sighted Upolu to starboard.

At 10.25 a.m., I was able to set the 'small Tahitian' again, with a few improvements and using the peak halyard; *Kurun's* speed increased noticeably. That afternoon, the wind freshened, with a squall and a downpour.

By nightfall, Upolu had disappeared. *Kurun* was on her way to the Horne Islands; the wind, freshening during the early hours of the night, promised well. Mile was added to mile. I was making some westing, occasionally shipping a sea.

On the 9th, early in the afternoon, two rorquals (balaenoptera) were following the boat and the next morning I saw some seagulls and a 'flight' of flying fish, a rare sight since Bora-Bora.

July 11th. A fine wind from S.E. $\frac{1}{2}$ E. *Kurun* was making five and a half knots. I expected to see land during the morning, and the seagulls seemed to be assuring me that I was right. The nearer I drew to these French islands (discovered by Lemaire and Schouten), the more numerous did the seagulls and gannets become.

At 10.15 a.m., land was straight ahead: Alofi, and how tiny it looked. To think that there were people living there, on that speck in the immensity of the Pacific! A little while later, Futuna became visible in its turn.

I passed Alofi close inshore. The island looked beautiful, entirely green, dominated by Mt. Bougainville. Along the coast were rocks and grottoes. I saw no trace of human habitation.

At 5.28 p.m., I rounded the extreme southern point of Alofi within about half a mile, and thus had the west coast in view. Through my glasses, I could see canoes and people—just the place to anchor for a few hours—but I hardened my heart against such weakness.

Futuna, with its accidented scenery seemed equally attractive. I saw smoke rising into the sky, and thought how peaceful life must be there.

At nightfall I passed within three miles of the village of Sigave, and a moment afterwards saw some bush fires flaring above the village; but by this time, the wind had freshened, and, her bows pointing west, *Kurun* cut her way into the darkness at a rate of six knots.

THE LONE SAILOR'S PROBLEM

Now for the New Hebrides and the Banks Islands.

I was expecting plenty of wind—I was in for more than I bargained for.

July 12th. 8 a.m. Seventy-two miles by the log since 8 p.m. the night before. Thunder in the air: the sky lowering with heavy, copper-coloured clouds.

By 12 o'clock, the wind had freshened and backed a point to the east. *Kurun* was devouring the miles, but I should have preferred a gentler wind and a kinder sea.

By 12.15 p.m. I noticed that the iron end of the port boom was badly twisted. I would have to take it in as soon as I had taken a sight of the sun.

By 12.30, the lift of the port staysail had parted. Five minutes later, the boom was in the sea. The cutter luffed into the wind and took a sea over the bow. All the sails were flapping hard. As quickly as I could, I fished everything out of the water, took in the port staysail and proceeded on my course.

The iron fitting had worked loose through twisting in spite of its heaviness. Had the locking nut been in place with a pin, this damage might have been avoided, but I had omitted to take this precaution.

There I was, robbed of my automatic steering for sailing before the wind, and, sitting at the helm, I pondered on the consequences so small an incident might have for the singlehanded navigator. Balance under sail, sailing with the helm lashed: these were the forcible problems confronting me.

As it was, I had been thinking of the possibility of sailing with the wind on the quarter, the helm being worked by the sheet of the lee staysail, led to the tiller by blocks fixed to the weather side. In theory, my reasoning appeared flawless, so I set to at once to put it into practice.

At 12.50 p.m., I made fast the sheet of the starboard staysail boom to the tiller, using the leading blocks on the port side. And, thank heavens, after I had quickly regulated the shock absorbers, *Kurun* kept splendidly to her course.

I had been forced, by this mishap, to stumble upon a discovery that was to revolutionize my method of singlehanded navigation, for a sailing ship on a long voyage, with the helm lashed, must keep to her course, whether sailing before the wind or not.

BORA-BORA TO NEW GUINEA

I had just crossed the Greenwich anti-meridian.

To the north, the sky had a nasty look about it, and I eyed the cirro-cumuli and alto-cumuli anxiously from time to time, for they boded little good. By 1.15 p.m., I had set No. 3 jib flat on the boom to avoid luffing into the wind.

8 p.m. the wind had moderated a little. I could see clouds at a high altitude coming ahead from west-north-west. The outlook was black.

Before turning in, I carried out a double operation: not only did I change the hour but I also changed the date. I had crossed the meridian 180° , leaving the western longitudes, and one day had to be dropped out of the calendar. Though the reasoning is perfect, yet it amused me to find that it demands an effort to bring oneself to skip a day. I compelled myself to be logical. It was a Friday that I had sacrificed, and the 13th of the month to boot.

This was the last day of my bread. It had kept perfectly up to the very last slice, which was excellent for eighteen days in the tropics; I felt that I owed thanks to the Chinese baker of Bora-Bora.

July 14th. *Kurun* was keeping well to her course. I slept. At 3.40 a.m., I woke to find that the boat had just got aback, but fortunately with no damage. I got her on to her course again, due west, making six knots with ease and without forcing the pace.

By dawn, the sky was looking very ugly and overcast. Squalls. At 7 a.m., I went to the helm.

8 a.m., wind from the east-south-east, velocity 6 to 7. Sea rather rough. Twenty-six miles by the log during the last watch.

The wind was freshening. Low clouds, sky completely overcast. The weather was deteriorating and I was expecting a sudden gale. A heavy sea was running and the boat was becoming difficult to manage. *Kurun* literally skimmed over the fierce crests—seven knots—but I knew she could not keep that pace up for long. The pleasure of struggling with ropes and sails must be foregone when sailing singlehanded out in the open sea. If the weather showed no signs of mending, I should have to take in sail.

At 10.45 a.m., the cutter, which was sheering about in the huge rollers, yawed round to starboard, and there was nothing I could do about it. By the skin of my teeth, I avoided gybing, but the mainsail was lashing about and the sheet snapped like pack-thread.

I FIGHT FOR MY LUNCH

I took in the sail, which was flapping madly, keeping on my course with the headsails: staysail on its boom braced square, small storm jib sheeted flat.

Violent squalls. No visibility. Dirty weather.

Lunch was out of the question; I had to stay on deck, heading to the west.

The sea had assumed its worst bad weather aspect, and the wind had reached full gale proportions. Firmly braced, standing on deck, my feet well planted, wedged between cabin top and the spars of the mainsail, protected by oilskins, sou'wester and oiled trousers, I kept the boat running before the sea.

From 1 p.m. to 1.45 p.m., there was a violent squall.

2.30 p.m. A dorado on the line—and what a moment to choose! Determined not to lose a fine fish, however, I began to haul it in. It put up a fierce fight and entangled the trailing line with the log. My short steel gaff for hooking large fish on board was not ready, which was an oversight that meant I would have to do without it. At last I managed to wind the fine stainless steel cast round my arm and to get the fish on deck in a nice tangle of line. It isn't easy to fish and steer at the same time.

After the dorado had executed a few spectacular leaps on the deck, back it sprang into the sea, tangle of line and all. Again I hauled the whole lot in, cutting my finger on the steel wire of the cast. In the midst of the excitement, we broached to and the deck was swamped by a heavy sea. But I got that dorado on to the port side amidships and stilled its activity by a few knife thrusts in its head. The scuppers were spouting water, but my fisherman's honour was secure.

Fresh fish was a dish to look forward to. I smacked my salty lips over the thought of the luscious meal I was going to cook myself, for my lack of lunch was stimulating my imagination.

3 p.m. Exceedingly violent squalls, downpours and rough sea. Visibility was limited to a few hundred yards and I was literally blinded by the spray that was lashing me from top to toe. The troughs of the rollers wore a hideous aspect and at times I felt my stomach contract with horror. This was the worst weather my boat had seen yet.

Soaked under my oilskins, cold despite my woollens, I focussed all my attention on the combers that were threatening to engulf

BORA-BORA TO NEW GUINEA

me. *Kurun* behaved splendidly, never shipping one. My hand on the helm was sensitive to every tremor of the water, but I felt that this was approaching the limit of my fortitude. It would be dangerous to carry on much longer that way. Before nightfall I should have to take in all sail and heave to.

5 p.m. Impossible to take in the staysail. The hanks were foul between the stays. No matter how hard I hauled on the sail, it wouldn't budge an inch. The situation was nasty. Fortunately, there was a moment's respite in the severity of the weather, and the boat mercifully stayed before the wind. I decided on the only possible solution: put on my trousers again (I had removed them to give myself greater freedom of movement), take my knife and climb the stay to cut away the seizings of the hanks. I had no alternative, with night nearly upon me. Clambering aloft—a fine sport in this weather—I wielded the boat-hook and managed to get the confounded sail down.

Everything was in order before the night. I carried on under No. 3 jib sheeted flat. The poor mauled sail now had a nasty tear as well as all its darns and patches, but I thought it would weather the night. 'And then, Father Aeolus,' I murmured, 'carry her off if you want to. It wouldn't worry me. All I want is a chance to get dry.'

Below, I had the tremendous satisfaction of being at home, in the shelter of my own boat on the broad, open sea. I opened the three-star cognac bottle, given me by the mess of *La Grandière*, and poured myself a snorter.

I had a quick snack and gave all my attention to having a rest.

7.10 p.m. We shipped a heavy sea and I was thrown from the port bunk to the starboard one.

Squalls. Pouring rain. Sky lowering and overcast. Pitch black night. The boat was rolling badly and shipping sea after sea. I tried to sleep but couldn't close an eye. A fine 14th of July!

July 15th. I ran before the storm with No. 3 jib sheeted flat. Gale. Heavy seas. I was growing drowsy.

1 a.m. Shipped a heavy sea; 1.40 a.m., and another; 4.40 a.m., and another.

The sky looked particularly ugly at dawn. I pumped the bilges dry. The hull was tight enough, but the deck was letting an

NEARLY A DISASTER

occasional trickle through as waves washed over it, and cumulatively the amount of water was beginning to matter. The bilge pump valve came off so that pumping was temporarily impossible. I tidied up the deck.

Then I put my mind to the problem of the dorado. Though there was plenty of wind and sea, *Kurun* was behaving splendidly, except that she caught an occasional packet when she threatened to broach-to. I set to work to prepare the fish according to the rules of the art. Part of it was to be eaten raw, *au mitiari*—a Polynesian recipe which included lemon-juice and coco-nut milk. Part I boiled for stock. The remainder I cleaned for drying in the sun.

Lunch prepared, I stretched out for a few minutes on the starboard bunk. After lunch I intended to lie-to; it would be safer and the boat would roll less.

About 1.10 p.m.—I was some two hundred and twenty miles N.W. $\frac{1}{4}$ N. of Viti Levu, the Fiji Islands—my thoughts were abruptly interrupted by a tremendous din. The boat seemed to be picked up by an irresistible force. I realized what was happening—without apprehension, let me add. I was for it. Either the boat was going to capsize or else the cabin roof was going to be stove in. I was thrown roughly against the panelling and bombarded with a variety of objects, including every book from the shelves on the port side. I watched them hurtling through the air towards me. The galley port-hole, kept open for ventilation, became a mouth, spewing an enormous jet of water, like a huge tap turned full on. As violently as she had been thrown on her side, *Kurun* was hurled on to an even keel again. She had refused to capsize.

I was a little dazed. I had a black eye and my face was contused and bleeding, but I leapt to my feet and jumped on deck. The water was up to the rail and slowly running out of the scuppers. No damage. All as it should be, though the spars had shifted a little. The jerry-cans had worked loose and I caught one of them as it was still balancing on the rail, held by the lifelines.

But I had no time to waste on that. I went straight over to the fife-rail and took in the jib. Rapidly *Kurun* swung round broadside on to the sea; she rose and fell with the greatest ease, a huge eddy forming to windward.

A quarter of an hour later, I was hove-to on the port tack,

BORA-BORA TO NEW GUINEA

having secured, not without difficulty, sails, tackle and ropes in a vast confused heap in the forepeak.

The cabin was in a pitiful state. Books soaked, torn, some floating in the water. All sorts of objects flung together in every corner. My logarithm tables were squashed behind the galley sideboard, and other articles wedged in the chart table pen box at the after end of the cabin were now forward. Not only, therefore, had *Kurun* been thrown on her side, but she had also pitched considerably before lying flat on the water. Had there been another such attack on the broadside, she would probably have turned right round. It was disheartening to see things in such a mess, but I had come through, and, in so far as the state of my face permitted, I smiled.

Fortunately, the accident had robbed me of my appetite—I say fortunately, for I could find no trace of the food I had prepared. It was no doubt part of the mêlée of books and equipment. I began by picking up what was most precious to me.

That afternoon, as I was staring out over the sea, I saw two or three of those enormous foam-capped rollers toppling over. It gave me something to think about. Yes, a small boat could be turned over, after all. I watched those white crests: I had made the big mistake of running before the wind too long. I had believed myself safe, but I wasn't. A sailor should never 'believe', he should be sure. I swore then and there that never again would I fly before a gale. Father Neptune had given me a timely, albeit harsh, warning.

Had I been on deck when the boat was swamped, I should probably have been washed overboard. I might have seen *Kurun* once more as she was lifted on the crest of one of those mighty waves before I was finally swallowed up. And *Kurun* would have continued on her lonely course until she was dashed on some deserted reef on one of the archipelagos. On the other hand, had I been at the helm, I might have managed to keep her stern on to the wave.

The more I thought about my narrow escape, the more annoyed I was with myself for having failed *Kurun* the way I had, and the more depressed I became. I even considered making for Port Vila in the New Hebrides to get the boat cleaned up and to give myself a rest. I even meditated spending some months in

THE NEW HEBRIDES IN SIGHT

Australia, but this was only a fleeting despondency, and I soon shook it off.

I remained hove-to until July 19th. On that day, at 10 a.m., after having taken in the trysail, I proceeded on my course once more, with the 'small dauphin' and the starboard staysail. At 11 a.m., I set the 'small Tahitian'.

The wind was fresh, the sea rough, but the weather had become more clement. I could have resumed sailing two days earlier.

I had had to renew the log line. The old one had been cut, no doubt by a shark attracted by the rotator that hung down when the boat was hove-to. In the future, whenever I was hove-to, I took in the log to avoid a recurrence of the incident.

I had by now repaired the pump and brought the cabin into some order. The day before, just at nightfall, I had had an unpleasant experience: I had seen a dark mass floating near the surface. Was it a corpse? But on examination, in spite of its resemblance to a body, it had turned out to be a *peue*, a Tahitian mat, which I had put near the bows to dry and which had been washed overboard.

July 21st. The New Hebrides were about due to appear. According to my calculations, I thought I might see land at any time after midday. I was firmly convinced that it ought to lie straight ahead—it was probably a matter of a few miles' visibility.

3 p.m. Land on the port bow: Aurora Island. It called for a sailor's eye to perceive it. Nothing more than a small patch of grey. I was pleased. The wind, which was negligible by now, gave me little speed. By 9 p.m., I decided to take in all sail and go below to sleep until the next day, when I could no doubt make sail in better conditions, with myself at the helm.

July 22nd. Sky overcast; squalls and rain.

Towards the end of the night, a light north-east breeze seemed to be setting in. Though my alarm clock had woken me at an early hour, I could not bring myself to go on deck. I was so comfortable and dry, whereas on deck—I felt little inclination to have my face washed over and over again by the rain. I shook myself. 'Come on, sailor! Shame upon you!' At 4.40 a.m., I set the staysails.

Visibility was moderate and though the land had risen well above the horizon, it was to be seen again only some time after

BORA-BORA TO NEW GUINEA

dawn had broken. I was a little reluctant to set more sail, for I should have had to change over the tacks to set the 'small Tahitian'. By 10.25 a.m., I decided, however, on setting the normal mainsail in order to get some speed up. Soon Meralaba Island was in sight, though its peak was unfortunately veiled by cloud.

At midday I rounded the northern extremity of Aurora Island, within three miles of the shore. *Kurun* was doing six knots. As the wind (force 5) seemed to have set in, I decided I would stay at the helm until the next morning. After that, I'd see.

Maiwo, Aurora. A wilderness of impressive beauty. I saw no trace of human life—I was, of course, rather far out. Sky overcast. Squalls over the land. Not a stray ray of sunshine. Melanesia... more islands I should have liked to visit. Nothing would have pleased me more than to have anchored at Laka Rere that evening. It is said that the natives always come to the falls there, and are always at war, but I do not believe that 'savages' are so ferocious, or that they are worse than people elsewhere.

The island of Meralaba, or Star Peak, an outpost of the Banks Islands, was perfectly visible: a huge cone rising from the sea and, from a distance, looking like a giant pyramid. Here again, the summit was hidden by cloud.

Along the coast of Maiwo, I observed a wonderful spectacle: the surf breaking on a half-submerged rock formed an amazing geyser that looked like the spouting of an enormous whale.

No question of a proper lunch. The wind had backed to the east and it was necessary to get moving. I left the tiller for a few moments to go below, but the boat quickly luffed up. Between two lurches, I contrived to get some puffed wheat into a mug, together with some condensed milk and Nescafé, and consumed the mixture while sitting at the helm.

Kurun was running fast now and I was fairly satisfied. In the afternoon, I sighted the island of Aoba, one of the New Hebrides, and the island of Gaua or Santa Maria, one of the Banks Islands. Shortly before midnight, I left the helm for a moment, at the expense of keeping my course, and went below for some food.

July 23rd. At the helm I was dropping with sleep. These night watches are always irksome.

4 a.m. I hove-to, to give myself a rest. At 5 a.m., I decided to take in all sail and then sleep a little.

A SHARK TAKES MY SHORTS

After daybreak, the northern peaks of Espiritu Santo, the largest of the New Hebrides, were visible; so was Gaua.

At 8 a.m., on an east-south-east wind of force 4, I set the head-sails, twenty-six miles north-north-east of Cape Cumberland, the north-west point of Santo. The cirri and the cloudy sky seemed to promise wind, and that was what I wanted. I had no wish to moulder away in the Coral Sea.

I considered the feasibility of going back to the twin staysails, and carefully examined the twisted fitting, but, as I had feared, it snapped when I tried to straighten it, which was one way of solving my problem. This meant that it was no longer possible for me to sail before the wind without being at the helm, and that in turn meant considerable extra fatigue and less time for other tasks.

At 10.15 a.m., I set the 'small Tahitian' and thus, with the wind on the quarter, was able to traverse most of the Coral Sea.

On the 24th, the wind freshened and we covered considerable distances, day after day; there was a lot of spray, however, for the sea continued rough. I had to keep the hatches and port-holes closed, and the deck was rarely dry.

July 28th. I washed a pair of shorts according to a method I had evolved for economizing in fresh water: first wash in a very little fresh water, then rinse in plenty of sea water before rinsing in a little fresh to get rid of the salt. Having given the shorts their first wash, I attached them to a line ready for their sea water rinse. A few moments later, when I came to haul them in, I found the line had been cut. A shark must have come along.

July 29th. As on every other day, I continued the battle against the copra insects. It was a futile struggle. Two or three weeks after my arrival at Tahiti, they had invaded the boat and ever since had grown prodigiously in number. I inflicted extensive massacres, time and time again. I used flytox, American insecticides, D.D.T., and poisoned pastes. Many died, but more lived. These insects have an extraordinary vitality. When crushed or cut in half, they still survive and continue to attack anything and everything: books, linen, food—it is impossible to preserve anything, except in airtight containers. The fruit and potatoes, which had to be kept uncovered, suffered most. Those insects were the plague of my life.

That evening, I intended changing my course in order to follow one that I had traced on the chart, N. 65 W., which ended thirty

BORA-BORA TO NEW GUINEA

miles to the south of Point Hood, where I intended to make a landfall. I was slightly to the south of my original route. In any case, I had made excellent progress since Santo. I ate the last of the grapefruit I had taken on board at Raiatea.

July 30th. The wind eased and shifted. Squalls. I had to steer again—no more peace now until I reached Port Moresby. This morning, I saw several seagulls and gannets.

July 31st. Squalls, abundant rain, variable winds—unpleasant weather. I re-established normal sail, setting the ‘Paimpolaise’. Birds all day. No chance to have a meal; I had to be at the tiller.

August 1st. At noon, my position by observation was close to the coast of New Guinea. I wanted to see the coast before taking a little rest, but after yet another sleepless night, I could hardly keep my eyes open. I hove-to and rested.

At 4 p.m., I made sail again and headed straight towards land.

4.50 p.m. A large tree-trunk drifted past. No land in sight, yet I felt its proximity. I knew that in the season of the south-east monsoon, it was likely to be hazy.

At 6.15 p.m., I went about to avoid approaching too near land during the night.

At 10 p.m., I hove-to on the port tack, for I had decided to rest until morning. As I had not had a meal that day, I opened some tins (which was a thing I rarely did, as I do not altogether trust tinned food); I did not wish to sleep on an empty stomach.

August 2nd. A long night's rest did me a world of good. Daylight revealed high peaks to the north and north-east, part of the Owen Stanley range, which has mountains of eleven to twelve thousand feet. What with the distance and the poor visibility, I was unable to identify them. And with the rising of the sun the peaks vanished.

At 7 a.m., I continued on my course with an east-south-east wind, force 3. I encountered more drifting vegetable matter, including a good many trees, which indicated the presence of currents that did not tally with the information contained in the various nautical documents I had on board. If the current were running landward and towards the far end of the Gulf of Papua, where were the trees coming from?

9.08 a.m.: land in sight, towards the north; no identification possible. I had, moreover, made some calculations based on observations which gave me a position that differed from my dead

THE SMELL OF THE FOREST

reckoning position. Oh, those arrows boldly indicating currents on charts! With slight winds or calms, the current was certainly different from the one that would be caused by a fresh trade wind along a coastline.

I trailed my fishing line which I had mended after it had been cut. I wanted to catch something, for I was hungry and I felt that so near land there ought to be fish. I was not disappointed. Almost immediately I saw a dorado bite. As I was hauling it in, another was swimming round it, but I decided one was enough. I made up for lost meals and for my many hurried snacks. I prepared myself a plateful of raw fish, then cooked some, and suspended the rest from the awning rail to dry.

By midday, I was nine miles S. $\frac{1}{4}$ E. of the island of Coutance. I made doubly sure by observation and calculations, for it was the first point along the coast that I had been able to identify with certainty. The island, a bower of trees, was the abode of innumerable pigeons. It was a pity I had no time to stop.

Until nightfall, I sailed along the coast, avoiding a point marked 'doubtful' on the chart. Had it been a few hours earlier, I should have anchored for safety in Hood Bay or in Beagle Bay for the night. At Port Moresby, I was to hear that it was a lucky thing I had not done so, as the natives in those parts are unreliable.

At night, large bush fires were lighting up the sky. I had seen, that morning, a huge pall of smoke rising from the land, and all day there had been a dark cloud in the far distance. Was there a volcanic eruption?

August 3rd. At one in the morning, a heavy perfume came wafting from the land. I like the fragrance of virgin forest. When one has been at sea for some months, one's sense of smell becomes remarkably keen.

At 2 a.m., I hove-to for a rest.

By daybreak, the land was well within sight, though the haze made it impossible to identify it. That was typical of this coastline; during the south-east monsoon, navigation in these waters is a delicate business. The scenery had plenty of variation, which was accentuated by the haze, owing to several successive rising levels of foothills and mountains. Distances and scale were difficult to estimate. All values were relative. A small hill could look like a mountain.

BORA-BORA TO NEW GUINEA

The wind fell as the sun climbed above the horizon. The weather now was splendid, making it seem as if the Pacific Ocean wanted to make a good impression on me before I left it. The boat was neither rolling nor pitching, and I availed myself of the opportunity to put a few things out to dry: bedding, linen, sails. The deck looked like a second-hand shop.

The coast is protected by a barrier reef, which makes navigation exceedingly dangerous at night, for the reef is often submerged. Behind it, on the lagoon, I could see native canoes, or at least I could see their square sails, which from a distance look like beacons or small turrets.

We were not making much progress, yet, by 4.45 p.m., we were abreast of Cape Tupuseli, which I had identified a few moments before. Soon I could see the wreck of the cargo boat *Pruth*; it was only much later than I was to learn her name. The coastline continued to be most disconcerting and demanded all my attention.

At 5.25 p.m., I sighted the beacon of the Basilisk passage which leads to Port Moresby. No possibility of making it that night. Time after time, I climbed the rigging in an attempt to get some idea of the nature of the reef. The water was beautifully transparent, but at night that would be of little use to me. The barrier reef was submerged, and with the fine weather there were few breakers to indicate where it was. The *Pruth* was astride the coral, right out of the water. At Port Moresby, I was told that, a few months earlier, another cargo boat of four thousand tons had run on the reef during the night. With all their modern apparatus, ships should not have accidents like this, unless seamanship has declined as machines and instruments have been perfected. Progress has demanded its price.

With the onset of night, I followed a safe course, and at 6.25 p.m. hove-to outside the passage.

Not everything was tidy on board yet, and I had not given the chart a final glance. I lit the navigation lights and added a small cable to the anchor chain in case I should have to drop anchor before reaching the right place.

At 7.30 p.m., I let the sails draw. The current had carried me westward, but I was exactly in the middle of the channel. On account of the current, I was obliged to keep heading to the eastward of my course. I soon identified the guiding lights of the

POR T MORESBY

entrance and at 8.05 p.m. I was abreast of the beacon of the Basilisk channel.

I entered the lagoon and saw a cutter with a light at the mast-head manned by sundry blacks who were calling out to me. I could not understand a word of their lingo and asked them, in English, if they were a pilot cutter. They understood me as little as I understood them. In any case, *Kurun* was much too fast for them. I left them astern and made for the roads. I rounded the Logobu Motu Motu reef with ease, then luffed round into the harbour.

Port Moresby was a sea of light. Before long, the sails shivered and I had to tack to reach the other end of the harbour. A large cargo boat lay alongside the wharf, brightly illuminated. The infernal clatter made by engines filled my ears and it was as if I had arrived in a vast factory.

9.40 p.m. I anchored within two cables of the shore. To be on a sheet of water as flat as a board gave me a strange feeling.

On leaving Bora-Bora, I had reckoned on a forty days' stretch to New Guinea. It had taken me thirty-nine—a good crossing.

My first call ashore was on the harbour master. I offered to comply with the usual formalities, but I had before me a true English gentleman who displayed no wish to see my papers. 'You are a yacht,' he said. That was sufficient. The customs officials received me in much the same way. Formalities were of the simplest and were quickly dispatched.

I was surprised to find a yacht club at Port Moresby; it had a number of small one-design boats, owned by enthusiastic sailors who made me an honorary member of their club. These boats were built for competitions and were all of one series, of the same type as the famous V.J.'s of Sydney, but smaller. The majority had been built by amateurs.

I stayed a week at Port Moresby and devoted most of the time to the care of my boat rather than to pleasure.

Port Moresby, the biggest city of New Guinea, is built on two denuded hills, and is a town of no more than a few thousand inhabitants. It is a centre of officials and traders, and I was surprised to see in the streets native women wearing no more than a pretence at a skirt, barefooted and bare-breasted. These women looked very odd in contrast with the assistants in the stores and the fine modern shops, who wore normal European clothes, but the

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visitor grows used to the sight more quickly than one might imagine.

I admired the natives for their fine carriage, their gaily coloured garments, their bracelets, collars and tattoo patterns.

I called on the Catholic Mission in the village.

Native canoes frequently call at Port Moresby; these canoes are the famed lakatois—long, slender craft, usually double: the catamarans; others have only an outrigger. They appear to have remained unchanged since time immemorial. They are rigged with a square spritsail, and can easily exceed ten knots. To discover that these Papuans, unlike the modern Polynesians, had remained sailors was a pleasant surprise. They had hundreds of canoes and used them. I used to chat with the crews who came to town to trade. With their wives, they would spend hours, sitting motionless on the platforms of their craft, chewing their betel-nut with unslaked bone-dust, which they always carried with them in small boxes. I tasted this famous nut, the juice of which turns the saliva a bright red; but I was not able to relish it as the natives did.

One day, as I was strolling in the town, a jeep suddenly drew up beside me and a voice called: 'You the Frenchman?'

The man at the wheel, greying hair, long trousers, small purple bands, was the apostolic vicar of New Guinea, Mgr. Sorin. I was charmed by his enthusiastic attitude, as he told me of the admirable and little-known work done by the French Mission in New Guinea. He insisted on my calling at Yule Island, about sixty miles northwest of Port Moresby, the headquarters of the Catholic Mission, and I decided that, at the end of my stay, I would avail myself of of his friendly invitation.

I had plenty to do on board: check the rigging and the sails, and also get the iron fitting of the twin staysails repaired. Thanks to the kind offices of one of the club members, a specialist in forged work, a new fitting was made for me within forty-eight hours, and in addition two small metal pieces were made that allowed me to fix a halyard for the small triangular sail to the masthead.

I replenished my water supply and took in fuel for my cooker. Unfortunately, I was disappointed in my efforts to revictual with fresh food. To my stupefaction, there was no fresh food at Port Moresby; every single item arrived frozen from Australia: eggs, meat, fish, even fruit and vegetables. I could not even find bananas

SAIL WITHOUT FRESH FOOD

in the stores. I did at last manage to get a few from a lakatoi, very small bananas, the skins of which smelt a little of natives; but the fruit itself had a delicious flavour.

On August 11th, at 1.20 p.m., I weighed anchor and set off, all sail set, with a fine breeze from S. $\frac{1}{2}$ S.E. After passing Logobu Motu Motu, I sailed close-hauled, for I had to beat out. In spite of the roughness of the water, a small one-design belonging to the club escorted me out.

I went about before the reef of Hanudamava Island; on the tack, I just managed to avoid the shallows of Arakuti, off Port Moresby beach. The lakatois, their sails well filled, were overtaking my boat like greased lightning. To watch these craft skimming the water was a most exciting spectacle. The Papuans were all making friendly signs to me and it was plain that they too felt the intoxication of fine sailing.

Near the island of Manubada, I tacked again, and at 3.10 p.m., I was in Basilisk passage. To go to Yule Island, I could have stayed in the lagoon which stretched northward, but without a chart, that route, however much shorter it may be, was not safe. I gave the reef a wide berth and, heading north-west, rounded Daugo Island, then Idiha Island, which was enveloped in birds. I saw an incredibly beautiful sunset, one of the New Guinea sunsets which are famed for their splendour. High clouds gave the scene an unearthly loveliness.

In spite of the moonlight, there was no question of seeking the anchorage of Yule during the night. So at 11 p.m., I hove-to. I was sufficiently far from the coast to sleep peacefully, which I did, dozing off shortly after midnight. At dawn, I could see Yule Island clearly and I resumed my course for Hall Sound, as the closed bay off Yule Island is called.

At 10.57 a.m., I anchored within a cable of the jetty of the French Mission at Port Leon.

The missionaries were expecting me. I was, in any case, flying my colours, knowing full well that the arrival of a French vessel at Yule must be in the nature of an event. Some young Papuans came out towards me in an outrigger propelled by a long oar and a long pole. The current made its return to the shore a laborious procedure.

This visit to Yule was a serious interruption of my programme,

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but I should have regretted it had I not called there. As it was, the delay did not exceed two and a half days.

I met some remarkable people at the Mission House; the atmosphere was one of peace and kindness allied to a profound understanding of the native and his nature.

There are also sisters of a religious order at Yule. Their visiting rooms might have been found anywhere in France with their well-polished floors, well arranged furniture, and quiet, reposeful atmosphere. Yet there they were, in the midst of savages at the other side of the globe.

Yule is a centre, a veritable little town. I was surprised to find that it had an electric power house on the edge of the virgin forest, an engineering workshop, a smithy, a carpenter's shop, a printing works and even a boatyard.

The Mission owns a flotilla of craft: launches, lighters, barges, and a coastal steamer. To run the entire organization demands both brains and muscle. I met three lay brothers on the station: two Frenchmen who had signed on for ten years, and one Australian who was captain of the coaster.

I walked along the beach as far as the very attractive native village of Chiria. On the edge of the water, shaded by coco-palms, the dwellings are in the true native style, with no trace of the hideous corrugated iron so common in the Pacific region. The natives wear native costume, which amounts almost to nudity. The women are clad in skirts of *tapa*.

New Guinea is by no means well known. It is the world's largest island, if Greenland be excepted. The peaks rise from enormous mountainous massifs to a height of more than eighteen thousand feet, and there is continuous virgin forest extending over a distance of fifteen hundred miles. The white races do not seem over-anxious to exploit the resources of the land. As yet, it is still the realm of the bird of paradise. If anyone should wish to withdraw from European life and return to a primitive existence, he will here find it even easier than on the South Sea islands. But it must be added that such an undertaking would have its dangers. There are still head-hunters in these parts.

CHAPTER XIV

FROM NEW GUINEA TO COCOS KEELING THROUGH TORRES STRAIT

August 14th. The time to leave Yule had come. I spent the time on board making last-minute preparations, seeing that everything was in good trim for wandering among the reefs of Torres.

Father Willem sent me a full load of coco-nuts and small lemons; as these last were a little too ripe, small girls belonging to the Mission were sent to pick others. Two little natives brought them out to me in a canoe and were fascinated by *Kurun*, inspecting everything with admiration.

Father Gremaud, the Mission's bursar, had half a dozen loaves re-baked for me. On returning to my boat at night, I found the after deck heaped with all kinds of fruit and vegetables. Everyone overwhelmed me with kindnesses: the kitchen sister baked some delicious cakes for me and the sisters insisted on washing my linen.

In the moonlight across Hall Sound, the black mass of the 'Big Land' was clearly visible. The almost imperceptible breath of the *mirikini*, the land breeze, did not even ripple the mirror-like expanse of the Sound on which *Kurun* lay motionless like a large nocturnal bird.

I got the pram on board and hoisted the sails. At midnight, I hove up the anchor. I did not have way enough for the boat to answer her helm and I began to fear that the current might carry me against a wreck which I knew to be near. For this reason, I hooked on to a barge that was anchored not far away and waited.

With the first breeze from the north-east I pushed off, then set the staysail. It was mainly the current that bore me away, parallel with the beach, and awkwardly I drew away from Port Leon.

Beyond Yule Island is a dangerous coral reef. There were no lights and I had no detailed chart, only a general one showing Yule as a small dot without particulars. Afraid of being driven on the reef, I let *Kurun* drift for a while, letting my anchor trail in the water on a good length of cable so that it would hook on to any

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reef in time to prevent an accident. With the first decent breeze, I hauled up the anchor and succeeded in getting away.

1.23 a.m. The beacon marking the east entrance to the passage came in sight. Beyond lay the open sea.

I drifted all night, steering only when there was some sort of breeze; there was no possibility of going below or turning in while we were so close under the coast.

With the coming of day, the land was still perfectly visible: Yule Island, and the coastline foothills of the 'Big Land' northward from Cape Suckling. A singularly feeble wind got up at 8 a.m. and took me to a point four miles south-west of the south buoy of Hall Sound. The rigging was chafing in the heavy swell from the south. Later in the morning, the wind steadied. At the helm, I lunched on fruit, the main dish consisting of half an enormous papaw, a present from the kitchen sister. After lunch, the wind freshened rapidly and shifted south-east: the *baura* of the Papuans.

At this point, there occurred an important event in the navigational history of *Kurun*, for it was here that I put into practice the automatic steering with which I had been experimenting during my earlier laps but which I had now evolved so that it could work in all normal conditions (see Appendix B). The boat thus steered herself, but as it was necessary to follow the course I had set myself very closely so that I should not miss Bligh Entrance—the entrance to Torres Strait—the next day, I had to rectify the course frequently by taking over the helm.

I had again encountered the monsoon that had been blowing during my recent crossing, and the boat was now rolling and shipping a considerable amount of water. There is never a moment's peace on that wretched sea! One wave left some fifteen fair-sized fish on the deck.

5.10 p.m. I had to take down two rolls in the mainsail as the wind continued to freshen. A little while later, I had to take down two more. The sky clouded over, the sea rose. *Kurun* was rolling a lot now and shipping even more water. No question of my turning in, especially as I had to watch the course most carefully. If the weather were going to continue like this, I was going to have fun entering the passage to the Strait.

I had spent a good deal of time poring over the route, for Torres Strait is reputed to be very dangerous for any sailing vessel without

ANXIOUS NAVIGATION

an auxiliary engine, and even more dangerous for a single-handed navigator who must remain on the alert the whole time. With two good sailors on board, it is comparatively easy, but for one man on his own it is an arduous undertaking.

August 16th. During the night, *Kurun* bore down upon the extremity of the Great Barrier Reef, a formation of coral reefs, unique in measuring some fourteen hundred miles in length, that defends the east coast of Australia. This reef does not project far out of the water and in places is altogether submerged, invisible from a distance, and thus constitutes a serious menace to navigation.

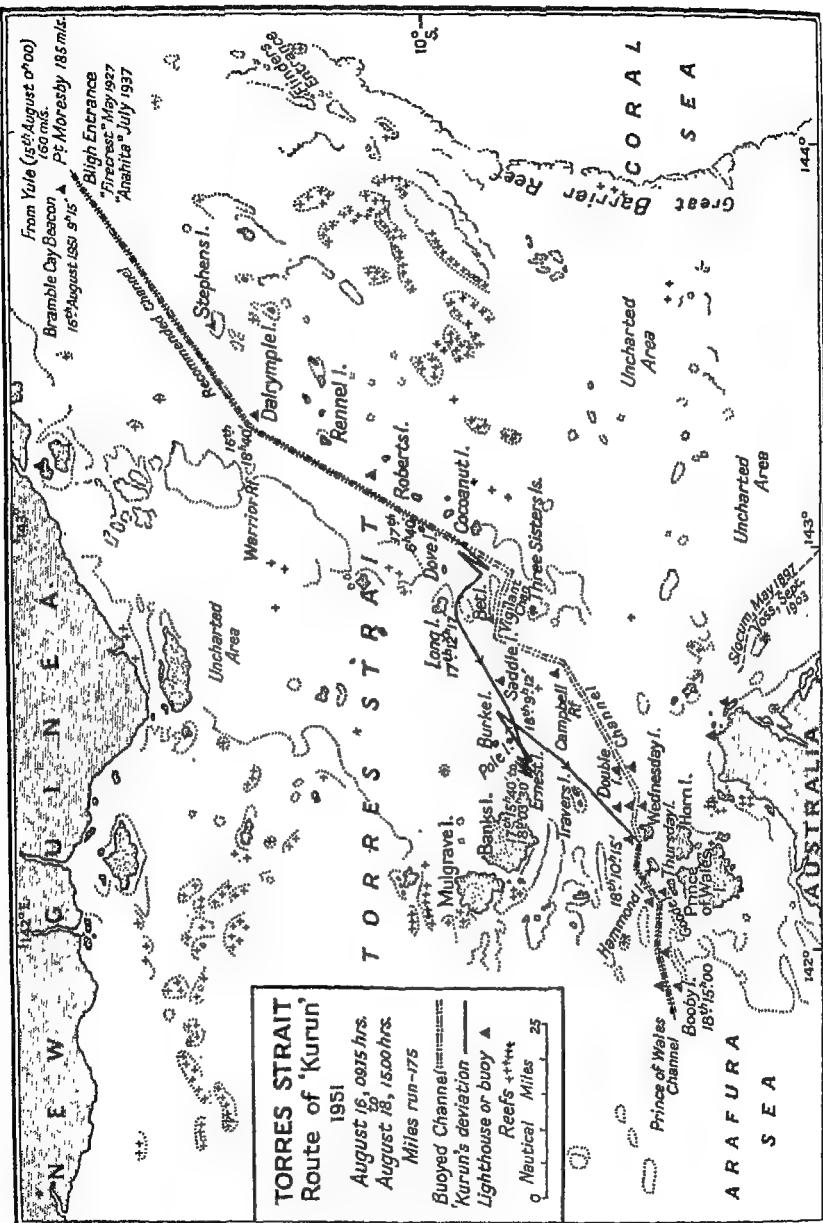
I stretched out on my bunk for a short time, and found it hard to prevent myself from falling asleep. I had my eyes glued to the reversed compass over my head.

Back on deck, I was surprised to find a gannet on the cabin top. Was it having a rest or had it come to collect one of the fish which I had forgotten to throw back into the sea? Whatever its motive, it flew off with a great flapping of wings as soon as I opened the hatch.

Dawn brought an overcast sky, mediocre visibility, squalls and a rough sea. Perspiring in my oilskins, I steered with the utmost care. I was approaching the reef at a considerable speed, and not without apprehension, for I knew my position only by approximation as the currents might well have borne me off my course. Not a star or heavenly body to give me an observed position. Anxiously I scanned the sea, seeking for an indication. Nothing at all. And *Kurun* was running fast. Late in the morning hours, unable to descry anything, I decided to heave to and wait until I should have a chance to make an observation. Blasted reefs! Would I see them only when I was on top of them?

9.15 a.m. A small grey vertical line, less than a point on the starboard bow. I could scarcely believe my eyes. Was it a boat? It turned out to be the beacon of Bramble Cay which marks the north of Bligh Entrance, the passage I had to follow to cross the Great Barrier. I was about five miles away from it.

Never had a landfall meant so much to me. I could hardly convince myself that, in such weather, in the middle of the coral sea, I had run dead on the landmark. Neptune himself must have kept a guiding hand at my helm. I had steered mainly by intuition.



ENTERING TORRES STRAIT

A few miles further to the north or south and I should have missed the beacon and run smack on to the Great Barrier Reef or on to any of the nameless minor—and uncharted—reefs.

Porpoises and birds were now flocking round *Kurun* as if to welcome her. Before long, I identified the sand-bank of Bramble Cay, then the Black Rocks on which the sea was breaking. The scene had a sinister fascination.

The distance between the buoy of Yule and Bramble Cay is about a hundred and sixty miles. *Kurun* had crossed the Gulf of Papua in twenty-four hours, running like a hare.

10 a.m. At about a mile and a half to the south of Bramble Cay, I changed my course to begin my passage through the famous Strait. I identified Stephens Island, some thirty miles distant. I was still steering with great care, keeping Bramble Cay on the same bearing, a sure way of following a course with precision.

At 11 a.m., I lost sight of Bramble Cay. As I sailed along the north-east channel, the heavy swell subsided, but there was a short, jerky wave and the wind had not slackened much. The mainsail, still with four rolls in it, was more than enough.

I sailed past an enormous black tree-trunk which was projecting some way out of the water—a fearsome battering ram that could do serious damage to a small boat.

1.10 p.m. Stephens Island in sight again. I headed for it and was soon able to distinguish the huge reef on which it rests and which practically links it to Campbell Island.

Stephens Island is well wooded and looked attractive. I could make out two or three houses but not a living soul could I see.

The tide was low. I followed the reef; it looked most alluring to one who likes walking along the foreshore. I was even considering the possibility of anchoring, but, what with the violent wind, the strong tides and swift currents, anchoring in peace seemed unlikely.

A bird tried in vain to settle on board—the wind was too strong. It kept on missing the boat, swept away every time like a feather and blown repeatedly into the sea. The last I saw of it, it was in the water.

I continued making for Dalrymple Island, hoping to get there before nightfall so that I could heave-to under the lee of it for a few hours before going on my way, and make for Coconut Island by the next dawn, aiming thus to get out of Torres late in the after-

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noon. I doubted whether it would be safe to venture beyond Coconut at night.

5.50 p.m. Dalrymple Island was in sight. I drew near it at a fine speed and was soon able to distinguish details; mainly the ugly looking reef which extends to the north-east beyond it. My Nautical Instructions said that there was a village on its east coast, but I could see nothing that could be taken as a village. I approached to within a few cables of the west coast where the reef was sheer. A dog was gambolling on the beach but there were no signs of human habitation. There was no chance of anchoring; the water was about a hundred and ten feet deep.

6.40 p.m. I hove-to under the lee of the island, taking care not to draw too close inshore for I had no fancy for scraping on the reef. By frequently tacking, with only the staysails set, I contrived to keep under the lee. Rest was out of the question. The dangerous Warrior Reef lay to leeward within five miles. The wind was strong and the currents were still running violently.

Between two tacks, I tidied up on board, had a snack, and had another look at the charts and nautical documents. I decided to go on again about one in the morning.

Unexpected job: while I was sheeting aft the jib, the halyard parted. I had not had time before setting out to renew it, which might be called inexcusable negligence. I rove a new halyard, which meant climbing the mast twice, each time taking some skin off my legs owing to the jerky movements of the boat.

The wind was strong, but there was a fine moon. The black, tree-clad mass of Dalrymple stood out clearly. I decided I could go ahead without much risk.

August 17th. 1.30 a.m. I proceeded on my course. At 2.35 a.m., Rennel Island was in sight; at 3.10 a.m., I had left it abaft the beam. Then I ran into some squalls.

Arden Island has a lighthouse. I did not see it until 4.20 a.m., and at 5 a.m., I passed within a short distance of it.

This was my third sleepless night running, and I was dropping with fatigue. I'd had seventy-two hours hard at it. I shook myself awake: this was not the moment to fall asleep. And I set my course between Roberts Island and Dove Island so that Coconut Island should be in sight by daybreak. Time and again I caught myself nodding off to sleep—only for a few seconds. I would awake with

A BATTLE WITH SLEEP

a start, to find I had allowed the boat to drop too far to leeward.

Just on 5.30 a.m., a huge comber with toppling crest advanced inexorably towards me in a line parallel with *Kurun* like a breaker about to crash down on the beach. That jerked me out of my somnolence. Quickly I turned the boat, presenting the stern to the oncoming wave. *Kurun* straddling it gallantly without shipping a drop of water. This could not be a breaker yet, but it had all the appearances of one.

Navigation was becoming a battle with sleep. To doze off would mean losing the boat and I resorted to pummelling myself and to pricking my legs with a knife to keep awake.

At daybreak, Roberts Island was within sight and soon afterwards Coconut Island loomed up. By 6.40 a.m., Roberts was abeam. Those wooded isles with their resplendent white beaches were very alluring.

The wind was very fresh, the sea a wonderful pale green, striped with foam. I made for Coconut Island as if it were my destination and as I drew near I could see human forms on the beach, attracted probably by the approach of the small, fast cutter with the bright red sails. I could clearly see a large cutter at anchor, and close inshore a smaller one. Both Gerbault and Bernicot have spoken of the anchorage as very bad, yet these two vessels looked very tranquil and secure. They were hardly moving, though the monsoon was blowing hard.

It was tantalising and I almost felt like anchoring there, if only to have a rest. I hesitated. But I did want to get out of the Strait. 'If I go on, I shall be in the Arafura Sea tonight,' I persuaded myself, 'and all danger will be over. Then I shall sleep.' So I went on.

On the west side of the island, there were boats drawn high up on the beach.

I made for Three Sisters Cape. There was a stiff breeze and visibility was deteriorating as a haze crept over everything. At first, I kept fairly well to windward, then, as I had a margin of several points, I steered straight for the spit I wanted to round: the sand-bank at the eastern extremity of the northern reef of the Three Sisters. Before long, Coconut Island had vanished below the hazy horizon. *Kurun* was now in a broken sea, pitching deeply and shipping a lot of water. I had not expected to meet such bad

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conditions, thinking that the screen of islands and reefs would prevent the formation of such a sea.

Black rocks appeared, indicating the north-east extremity of the sand-bank; there was the sea-mark on the point I had to round. I bore away. The sea was so lumpy that I could not gather speed. I drove the boat for all I was worth, and the deck was swamped from end to end. The rail vanished under the water, the sails were wet from top to bottom. Never had *Kurun* been so ill-used. I was standing in water, soaked to the skin. But I had left myself no choice. Tacking again and again, and sailing close to the wind, I tried to progress to windward. No success. My head-sails were not filling. I had a moment's anxiety. Was I going to be cast ashore? No hope of an anchor holding in such a sea. I turned back toward Coconut, on a long tack, with the island in sight again; the sea grew less choppy, and I returned to the attack. Again *Kurun* was roughly handled. I decided it was too dangerous to go further and bore away.

I contemplated returning to Coconut, but could not resign myself to such a confession of defeat.

Once more I studied the drenched chart in the flooded cabin. There was a passage between the Three Sisters and Dungeness reef, though it was little used; having thought it well over, I decided to make for it. I set my course towards the south of Long Island, and before long could see it clearly, wooded and attractive; I was tempted to anchor under its lee, but as the Nautical Instructions said there was an excellent anchorage off Mount Ernest Island, I decided to make for that, since there was now no possibility of getting out of Torres Strait that night.

Leaving Saddle Island—high and covered with beckoning vegetation—astern, I steered toward the sharp peak of Mount Ernest. Running fast, I passed between the island and the islet of Pecnacar and drew in toward the coast, noting the discolouration of the water. Even under the lee of the island there was a heavy swell, and violent gusts of wind came tearing down the mountain.

I was perplexed. Would it perhaps be better to lie-to that night instead of anchoring? However, I kept to my first decision and dropped anchor at the north-west extremity of the island about a third of a mile from the reef where the sea appeared smoother. By then, it was about 3.40 p.m.

LOSE AN ANCHOR AND CABLE

The current swung the boat round on her anchor, and I quickly took in the mainsail. It was low tide; on the other side of the reef lay a vast bare expanse. In front of some houses, a number of craft were drawn up on the land; probably a pleasant place to live in spite of the wind.

I tidied the deck and prepared some food. Then, after eighty-four hours of vigilance, I took a well-earned rest.

Kurun did not seem to resent the anchorage, though she occasionally jerked rather hard at the anchor-chain. I lay down on my wet bunk and after a while fell into a leaden sleep. But not for long!

10.40 p.m. I must have been woken by my unconscious. The chain seemed to be straining. I slipped on a pullover and went on deck to stopper the end of the chain. As I was climbing the ladder —bang! The chain had broken. I rushed to the bows to find that the swivel had given way—iron, more than half an inch thick. I had lost my fine calibrated chain together with my anchor, which was disheartening. Without losing a second, I checked the bearings of the position of the boat, before she drifted away, in the hope of retrieving my property later.

The trade wind had reached gale force and *Kurun* was being blown rapidly away from the island. After studying the chart afresh, I set sail. A painful process of tacking for hours on end followed. The sea was perhaps a little less rough than it had been in the morning, but the wind was much stronger. The cutter was swept by waves from end to end, and so fierce was the wind that I could not sheet the sails in. I was soaked to the skin, and my hands were badly lacerated. I watched the rigging anxiously. The wind was violent enough to blow the whole lot overboard, and that would be the end. Less than ten miles to leeward lay the reefs, swept by strong currents. *Kurun* fought bravely, with no sign of weakening.

Not before 3.30 a.m. did I manage to get back to the lee of the island. Hardly had I hove-to before the boat was caught in a current and carried rapidly north-east. So much for shelter! I let her go, deciding to run until daylight; I was not drifting into danger, thanks to the current.

I relinquished the hope of dragging for the anchor-chain in daylight; by then I should be on my way back to the channel.

Chilled through, I stretched myself out in my bunk, but I could

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not get warm. I had been wet for too long at a stretch, these last few days. At frequent intervals, I opened the hatch to find out what the current was doing. I was drifting safely past Pole Island.

8.15 a.m. After a welcome pot of coffee, I put on some dry clothes under well-buttoned up oilskins, and made sail again. The sea was exceedingly choppy and visibility was mediocre. Strong east-south-east wind. *Kurun* was making good speed and this time I had no doubts about reaching the open sea before nightfall. I was sailing full out and, largely by pointing to windward of the course I wanted, was keeping a sharp look-out for the landmarks I had chosen.

9.12 a.m. Ernest Island on the starboard beam. What speed!

9.45 a.m. I rounded Campbell reef. Travers Island in sight.

10.10 a.m. Land ahead, hazy and barely visible. It was the islands I had to round to the north. I passed between Beresford Banks and Marina Reef. I set my course for Ince Point on Wednesday Island, keeping it well to starboard. The nearer I got, the fiercer ran the current. At last I was in Prince of Wales Channel.

The weather was improving, the wind easing and shifting to the east. There were large cumuli over the land and the sea had calmed down now that the strong westward current was running in the same direction as the wind.

11.50 a.m. I made towards Hammond reef which was in sight. The sea was as smooth as a millpond; I was being carried along on a current of six and a half knots—the difference between the speed as indicated by the log and the distance as measured on the chart—it was like being on a fast flowing river. At half-past twelve, I passed Hammond Reef, where the eddies told their own story. By 1 p.m., I had reached the buoy of Harrison Reef at the further end of Prince of Wales Channel.

The Arafura Sea lay before me—the open sea!

I had completed a very difficult stage, and now reefs and dangers lay astern of *Kurun*. When passing Booby Island I checked my chronometer by a series of good observations of the sun, for I had been unable to get my radio to work for the last few days. There was a light easterly breeze and the sea was calm, the weather fine. I lashed the helm and set a southerly course to avoid the last perils of Torres Strait, still a little too near for comfort. Then I opened a bottle of Mumm Cordon Rouge. Dr. Lhoiry had

THE TEEMING ARAFURA SEA

presented me with three bottles as I was leaving Tahiti, and I had said to him, 'I shall drink one when I have passed through Torres Strait; and the last to celebrate rounding the Cape of Good Hope.' And here I was, toasting my people at home, my friends, and old Neptune, in the middle of the peaceful and imposing Arafura Sea. I had shaken off the fatigue induced by the superhuman efforts I had made during the last few days. If the two or three hours' sleep I had had under the lee of Ernest Island are excepted, I had gone for about a hundred and seven hours without sleep. I felt fit, at the top of my form, both physically and mentally. And I was happy.

Crossing the Arafura Sea was a delightful pleasure trip, real yachting in a light breeze—too light perhaps from the point of view of speed, but very restful. The sea remained calm nearly all the way. The sky was blue and often cloudless. The nights were wonderful. Unfortunately *Kurun* was not keeping strictly to her course; her captain was too keen on making up for lost sleep to care. The route she was following was becoming a beautiful zigzag on the chart. For days on end, I navigated through masses of plankton of unbelievable density; at times it looked as if bran or sawdust had been liberally sprinkled on the water. I had never seen anything like it. I often saw small sea-snakes asleep at the surface of the water, most of them a dirty white or maroon, though some had rings of different colours. A strange sea, the Arafura, teeming with mysterious life.

On August 19th, at 7.20 p.m., I saw a vessel astern, a very rare occurrence.

Having renewed the batteries of my radio set, I was once again able to pick up time signals and indeed had no more trouble until my return to Le Croisic.

August 26th. An exhausted bird settled on the horse-bar. I had to disturb it to tack. The day being Sunday, I prepared a special meal for myself: raw fish *au mitiari*, cold bonito, buttered taros, New Zealand cheese, bananas; fresh bread and butter; the last but one bottle of red wine, coffee and English cigarettes. A grand life. I had a short siesta, then studied the charts and pondered on the advisability of calling at the Cocos Keeling Islands, uncertain whether to waste a couple of days there or not.

Starry night, phosphorescent sea; the fine weather was holding. The wind was light and somewhat sportive, and running before it

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made steering quite tricky. To set the twin staysails was a job that would take several hours and I felt justified in making use of the gear only when I was sure that it could be kept in use for a reasonable length of time.

Just on 9.30 p.m., a phosphorescent shape dashed towards the stern and disappeared under the keel, a small cetacean probably. Such visitations always made me uneasy, for it might well be a bad-tempered grampus.

That day I finished my store of bananas and threw the last of the bread overboard; it had gone mouldy.

August 27th. 12.30 a.m. A plane heading north-west passed over the boat. In the silence of the night, I could hear the throb of its engines for a long time.

August 29th. Midday: wind N.E. $\frac{1}{2}$ E., force 3 to 4. Sea disturbed. Blue sky. A few cirro-strati and cumuli. The colour of the water a much deeper blue than of late.

I was now in considerably deeper water: about 1,600 to 1,700 feet. By heading west, I was avoiding the remaining dangers of the Timor Sea, which formed a screen between myself and the Indian Ocean.

My log had ceased to function and I set to work to take it to pieces and readjust it. It was a good little log and had shown correctly thousands of miles, besides seeing me through many a storm. At 7 p.m., I streamed the mended log. It revolved splendidly. I did not suspect that it would be giving me more trouble before long, although the ball bearings were showing signs of wear in spite of the daily oiling I had given them.

I expected to be within sight of land by the following midday; but with a change of wind I might well see land earlier so that I could not risk taking a good night's rest. I dared not let the boat steer herself. At 10 p.m., I lay down, having set my alarm clock for midnight, but in spite of my tiredness—I had spent the previous night at the helm—I could not sleep well. What if I slept through the alarm? What if it failed to go off? What if the wind shifted a few points and threw me on the coast? That is one of the drawbacks of singlehanded sailing: one must be alert when making a landfall.

August 30th. Running before the wind, sailing became extremely irksome.

CLEAR OF DANGERS

The numbers of birds I saw with the coming of daylight indicated the proximity of land. It was very hot at the helm, in spite of my hat and the shirt which I wore like a tent to protect myself from the sun. To expose one's body too long to the tropical sun is dangerous and I took care not to do so. For the first time, I was wearing sun glasses to obviate the glare on the water. In any case, I was tired.

Five minutes before taking the meridian, as I stood sextant in hand ready to begin measuring the final ascension of the sun, I saw land in the north-west—very hazy. It was the bulky mass of Mount Ailai, the highest point of Roti Island, the island adjoining Timor on which Alain Gerbault died.

I had intended passing close under the small Dana Island at the southern extremity of Roti Island, but, being very weary, I let the boat go on, helm lashed, a little further south; I watched her course from my bunk.

By nightfall, I was six miles south of Dana Island. The Indian Ocean.

Dropping with sleep, I went and lay down; stem pointing seaward.

August 31st. *Kurun* was sailing with the wind on the quarter, on the port tack, several points off her course, but in the open water. I slept and slept. Nevertheless, I still wanted to get three or four hundred miles further west as quickly as possible in order to be quite clear of complications. Towards the end of the season, the trade winds slacken, to be replaced by doldrums until the arrival of the north-west monsoon. The voyage of Voss in *Tilikum* affords a warning in point: he ventured into this region far too late and ran into nothing but calms and insignificant breezes.

September 1st. Some tropic-birds came and flew round the boat in the morning. The wind eased and dropped, so I was back at the helm till noon.

A few days before, I had noticed that one of the planks of the chain-locker at the foot of the mast was showing signs of insect damage. Part of the plank was entirely eaten away. I could only hope it wasn't the work of termites, though I had been assured at Tahiti that termites never leave dry land. I had occasionally been puzzled by small noises coming from the foot of the mast, and now I probed the woodwork with my knife and found some long, wide

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borings, the wood crumbling as I prodded. The mast had been attacked all round at cabin height, and the damage had spread to a point above the deck. I was horrified. Had the mast been eaten through to the core?

Fortunately, I am not easily downcast. Even if the mast were to break, I should be able to rig up a jury mast, efficient enough to allow me to reach land somewhere. Still, I was fairly worried. Had the mast carried away in Torres Strait, I should not have had a chance of saving my boat, and even if it held as far as Réunion, it would be a colossal expense to have a new one put in, besides the loss of time entailed. It would detain me throughout the entire cyclone season and would mean losing a whole year. What luck!

September 2nd. The damage to the mast appeared even worse than I had thought at first. I opened some of the borings and poured paraffin oil into them, but I realized that that would not prevent the insects from making their way upwards.

I had again to see to the log which was not working properly and was giving me under-estimates. I hauled it in and laid it aside. I was annoyed. Everything was wearing out, or getting damaged or being eaten. Poor *Kunun*!

My patience was beginning to wear thin. At night, in the cabin, though the weather was ideal, I felt somewhat depressed. These long single-handed voyages are an endurance test, inducing a constant state of tension, what with the weather, the course, the rigging, the sails, the hull, the water, the food, and all the other details that need perpetual supervision. I dreamed of a good anchorage, safe and sheltered, in which to stay for a few months at peace. I thought wistfully of Le Croisic and my homecoming.

September 3rd. I set my alarm clock for 2 a.m. The wind was shifting to the east every day towards dawn and I did not wish to get too far south. But that night it remained fairly steady. Perhaps conditions would improve now that I was further out to sea.

I was by now in the latitude of the Cocos Keeling Islands where I had decided after all to stay for a day or two. Without a log, I had to estimate my speed by sight. My estimation was not too bad: within five miles of my calculated position.

Not only was I troubled by insects gnawing away at the mast, but everything on board was being devoured, night and day, by

IN LOW SPIRITS

cockroaches. In spite of daily massacres, they had made the galley their own. They ate my potatoes, batatas and taros.

By 2 p.m., the sky was overcast: masses of cumuli, cirro-cumuli and alto-cumuli. The swell from the south was running long and hollow, a sure sign of bad weather down there. I hoped that I wasn't going to be caught in this latitude; I'd have plenty of that between Cocos Keeling and the Cape of Good Hope in any case.

At night, the sky cleared entirely and the wind freshened and shifted to the south-south-east. The first roller of the Indian Ocean climbed on deck and flooded the cabin through the open hatch. The captain gave it no very friendly welcome.

September 5th. Light wind from the east. Heavy swell from the south. The rigging chafed badly. An unpleasant watch under a fierce sun. No time to prepare lunch. I had to make do with biscuits and jam and an occasional glass of water.

A tropic-bird came to have a look at me, one of the finest specimens I had ever seen: small black spots on its wings, yellow markings on its body, a tail with long feathers that in the sunlight took on a rosy sheen.

I prepared myself a combined lunch-dinner by cooking an enormous dish of noodles.

September 6th. I had trouble with the 'fuel' for my cooking-stove: it refused to burn, though it nearly set the whole boat alight and covered everything in soot. My frying pan developed a hole. I had paid a shilling for it before the war in my camping days.

I lacked the spirit to do any work; I read and thought about various things.

Kurun was increasing speed: toward the end of the day, she was making nearly six knots. A magnificent night. I sat in the moonlight for a while, watching my brave little boat ardently forging ahead toward the west, covering mile after mile of a vast ocean on which she was but a tiny speck drawing an endless wake.

September 7th. This time I had caught the trade wind properly. The sea was no longer confused. As I drank my coffee, I watched a squall to the south; overhead four tropic-birds were circling.

We were rolling and heaving considerably, but the bow was sending forth enormous foaming moustaches.

In the brilliant sunshine, the sea looked wonderful, tipped with small white caps right to the horizon. The boat was shipping so

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much water that there was no need to wash the deck. Observations with the sextant were becoming a fine sport, but by now I was an old hand at the game.

By midday, I found I had covered a hundred and fifty-two miles in twenty-four hours. Since passing Rotti Island, *Kurun* had been doing fairly well in spite of light winds, for no day had given me less than a hundred and ten miles progress. At this rate, I could hope to be at Cocos Keeling on the 12th, if the breeze held, as was likely.

That lunch-time, I finished my last piece of dried dorado. I had invented a recipe that made dorado look and taste like roast chicken.

Heavy wind. We were doing approximately six and a half knots. Before nightfall, a roller deposited some twenty small fish on deck.

September 8th. We were rolling and heaving a good deal and I did not sleep well. There were many birds now, all the time: gannets, frigate-birds, and so on, owing no doubt to the proximity of Christmas Island; I passed within a hundred miles to the south of it this morning.

September 9th. The dawn was extremely hazy and the sky somewhat thundery. The sea grew quite hollow. A very long swell from the south-east added grandeur to the solitude.

The glass was higher than usual and I reckoned that the trade wind was going to blow harder, which suited me so long as it did not become a gale.

This morning, I picked up five flying fish off the deck, the first I had seen for some time. They were large enough to figure on the lunch menu.

11.10 a.m. After a fair amount of hesitation, I took three rolls in the mainsail, and later was glad I had done so, for the weather did not improve.

As I was preparing some rice on the gangway, washing it in sea water as usual, I saw Joseph sunning himself between two spars. Joseph, the lizard, the stowaway of *Kurun*. I had not seen him for weeks. All single-handed navigators are said to have had their pets. I had certainly been favoured in this matter, for my pet had some amazing virtues. I had discovered Joseph a few days after leaving Bora-Bora. I have no idea where he had joined the crew: at Tahiti,

JOSEPH THE STOWAWAY

Tahaa, Bora-Bora? That was to remain a mystery. But he looked pleasant enough and I had no wish to make life difficult for him. He was a most discreet companion and we treated each other with mutual respect, never disturbing one another. How he subsisted I do not know. He presumably lived under the spars and on the stern, though the pram was his favourite refuge. He must have had some bad moments in the Pacific and the Torres Strait.

At midday, sextant in hand, I got thoroughly swamped. I went below, dripping with water, but satisfied: a hundred and sixty miles during the last twenty-four hours. For the first time since I had left Yule, I shaved, a laborious operation after putting it off for so long.

Before lunch, I went on deck and washed all over with soap and a third of a bucket of fresh water, rinsing the soap off with sea water as usual. By the time I had finished, I was frozen to the marrow—and here I was in the tropics—and glad to get warm and dry down in the cabin.

September 10th. The boat rolled, heaved and shipped water. Sleep was difficult. At dawn, I picked up seventeen flying fish on the deck, a true windfall. A strong south-east wind and plenty of sea. The weather was tiresome and tiring. I was exhausted from being thrown about in the cabin; it was almost enough to put one off sailing.

A hundred and seventy-four miles since the previous noon, a record I had not hoped to achieve. A current of ten to twelve miles a day must have played its part, of course. *Kurun* was flying wonderfully along her course, pitching and sending in fine style: a magnificent sight. She was making straight for the Keelings, and at this rate I should arrive there during night-time, which I wanted to avoid: the atoll had no fixed light and, being low, it was not visible from a distance. The danger of running slap into it was not great, but a slight deviation from my course might cause me to miss it altogether. I decided to heave-to for the night and wait for day when I could make my observations and go straight in.

Setting my alarm clock, I turned in early.

September 11th. By midnight I was on deck. The wind had freshened, the sky was overcast, and there were squalls.

1.05 a.m. Hove-to on the port tack, watching. Towards the end of the night, conditions seemed good enough to make observations.

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I sighted Achernar, Canopus and Sirius, which, I felt, ought to be enough to enable me to make calculations. Making observations in a small boat in such weather is an arduous business, though with patience it can be done. The altitude must be taken when the boat is on a crest, provided a still higher crest does not obscure the star and provided one does not lose one's balance. Having observed Canopus, I had to give the other stars up, for they began playing hide and seek behind the clouds, mocking me as I tossed about on the angry rollers of a mighty ocean. A short time after daybreak, I obtained a good observation on the sun, and, having made my calculations, I let the sails draw at 8.45 a.m., I reckoned I should be seeing the atoll within an hour and a half.

At the helm. *Kurun* was running fast, and, torn by impatience, I kept climbing the mast but could see nothing resembling land.

10.15 a.m. Still nothing. I began to be a little perturbed. Were my calculations out? Was I going to miss the Cocos Keeling Islands?

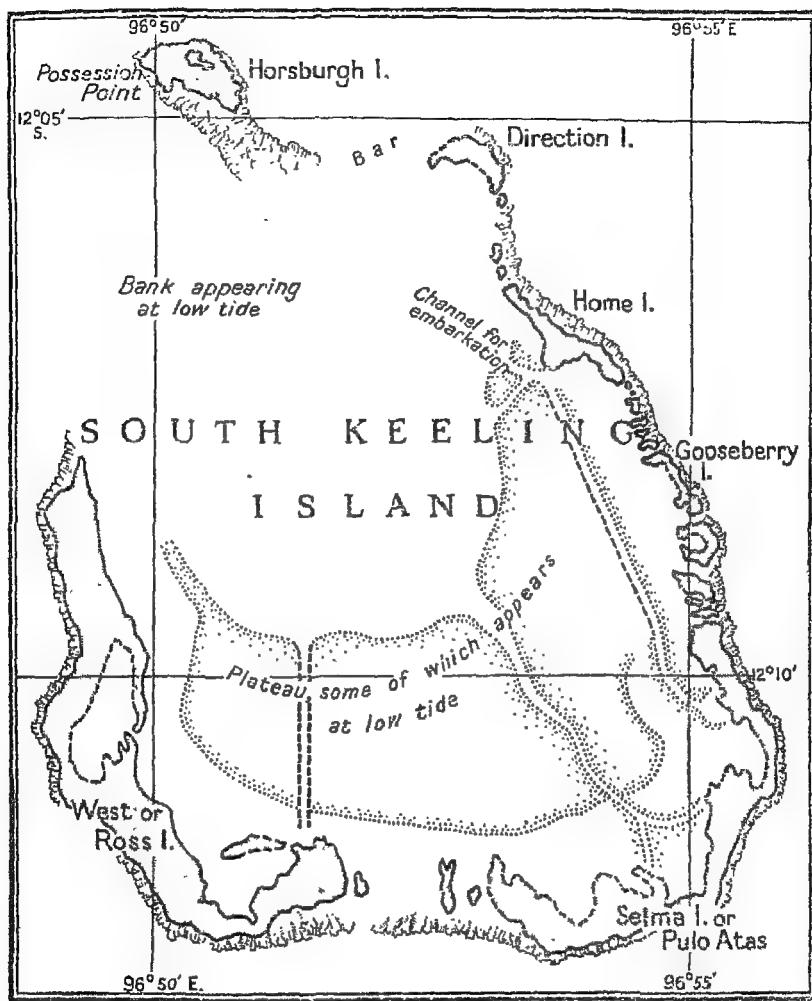
A few moments later, from the top of an enormous crest, I thought I could see a vague grey line on the horizon, but *Kurun* sank back into the trough too quickly for me to be certain. Another huge crest, on which she rode for several seconds. No possible doubt: the atoll. 10.30 a.m. No need to say how fast my heart was beating.

My view of the atoll was intermittent, but I was approaching it at a fine speed. The coco-palms were now standing out clearly, and I could see the beach. Beyond New Selma (Home Island), Direction Island was plainly to be seen in full detail, even to the greater transparency of the water close inshore where the breakers were crashing on to the sand.

1 p.m. Hove-to within a mile north-north-east of Direction Island. I got ready to anchor, tidied the deck and had a last look at the chart; the Nautical Instructions contained a warning that the road should be used with great circumspection.

The trade wind was blowing with force 7; in the hollow swell, the stern was pitching in a spectacular manner.

At 1.50 p.m., I proceeded on my course and rounded the northern extremity of the island. The men standing on the beach were frantically signalling to me as I drew in within a few cables of the shore. The water was magnificent and, in the sunlight, the bottom



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could be seen in clear detail. I was now navigating by sight and without difficulty. A child could have steered among those coral reefs.

Before long, I luffed up into the wind and went about a few times to reach the shelter of Port Refuge. A launch came to meet me, full of young men who made signs that I should anchor, but, seeing no danger, I turned a blind eye and drew further in, wishing to anchor near the beach. Beyond the last buoy, I noticed an eddy and saw that there were reefs. At last, responding to the signals made to me from the launch, I came-to and anchored.

As I was taking in the sails, the launch came alongside. I introduced myself: 'French, twenty-seven days from New Guinea.' While I was engaged in conversation with them, a long motor launch left the island and also came alongside my boat. I did not feel too pleased about this. My cable was beginning to strain under the weight of three boats. On board this second craft were Mr. B. de Burgh-Thomas, general manager for Mr. Ross, the proprietor of the island, Paul Baker, his secretary, R. Maclean, administrator, and a Malay crew. It was pleasant to be meeting people again. After a while, the larger launch went off, leaving me with the Admiralty launch. The cable gave a sigh of relief. The young men of the smaller launch helped me to get up the anchor and towed me to the beach.

While entering the atoll, I had had no doubts about being well-received, but I had not anticipated receiving the most cordial welcome of my whole voyage. British hospitality goes further than mere words.

Kurun had been taken to a large mooring buoy near the beach. I made fast with three lines, which was not excessive, as the trade wind was blowing with might and main.

The Cocos Keeling Islands are about six hundred miles to the south-west of Sunda Strait, in mid-ocean. They consist of two atolls of approximately the same length and about fifteen miles apart. The northern atoll is the smaller and has no channel, its lagoon forming an entirely enclosed lake. It is uninhabited and is only visited at intervals to collect copra. On its southern reef, the famous German raider, the *Emden*, during the First World War, while destroying the cable station, was surprised by the Australian cruiser *Sydney* and there ended her adventurous career. The wreck

BRITISH HOSPITALITY

is still there; the natives visit it periodically to collect pieces of its first-class steel from which they make excellent knives.

The southern atoll is much more important. Roughly pear-shaped, its main dimensions are eight miles by seven; it has the typical atoll formation, consisting of a number of islets with coco-palms. These islets rest on a coral base and surround a shallow lagoon.

Of the islets, only two are inhabited: Direction Island, situated on the eastern part of the top of the pear, and Home Island to the south-south-east of the former.

Direction Island is the headquarters of the Cable Company, Cable and Wireless Ltd. The Cocos Islands are in effect an important link between Rodriguez, Batavia and Perth. Since the war, the Navy has installed a wireless station there. The fourteen Europeans are all young men, with the exception of the director of the company, Mr. Sykes, and the chief of the wireless station, a retired petty officer. The few servants are Malays. Direction Island is an island of men. No white women are allowed there. An excellent spirit of comradeship prevails and these young men, all of them keen on sport, fishing and yachting in the lagoon, lead healthy open-air lives. The community, owing to the small size of the island, is a cross between that of a ship and of an English club with all the usual amenities: mess-room, library, games-room.

I was made a member of the mess, and I cannot remember having had to light my stove once to prepare myself food during that visit.

I was received by the Company manager who, by virtue of the hierarchy, was isolated in a bungalow of his own. That gentleman must have lived much the same kind of life as he would have lived at home: everything well-ordered and disciplined, an example of his nation's great strength of character.

In the hall of the bungalow, to my surprise, I saw a photograph of Captain Bernicot in his *Anahita*. At Home Island I was to meet natives who remembered him very well, as a great sailor and as a simple, unassuming and courageous man.

Nearly all the young men on the island were keen on sailing and were in a very advantageous position for practising it as a sport. They organized regattas.

The Cocos Islands are juridically in an anomalous position.

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They are private property, belonging to a Scottish family called Ross. In his story of his voyage in *Spray*, Slocum has given a humorous account of the seizure of the island by the first Ross, John Clunies, in 1816, since which date his family have retained their right of ownership.

One morning, a big launch from Home Island came to take me to spend a day on that island.

I did not, unfortunately, meet the King of Cocos, for young Ross, a descendant of John Clunies, had gone to England for his wedding. His general manager took me over his domain. As in the days of old, there is no money on the island, which has no disadvantages. The people who work for Ross receive what they need in exchange for their labour. It must be said that the ideas and needs of these workers are very different from those of their counterparts in Europe. They seem to live in amity and contentment. But the situation is paradoxical, for the income of the King of Cocos is calculated in millions.

The Ross dwelling is a large building, and is not particularly aesthetic. Built in glazed brick, imported from Scotland, it fully deserves its nickname: Lavatory Castle. Its hygienic frigidity and the severity of its lines are emphasized by the elegance of the coco-palms and the brilliant colours of the lagoon. The interior, with its vast, icy hall filled with busts of dead and gone Rosses, makes the same impression.

The present Ross is young, which explains the presence on the island of an administrator, responsible to the colony of Singapore. The native Malay population is dignified and placid. Happy land that knows not money! Everybody seems to be on good terms with everybody else. No policemen, no tax collectors, no papers or cinemas, no politics.

The population of Home Island is comparatively dense. The dwellings, while not beautiful, are neat and clean.

The wealth of the Cocos Islands springs, obviously, from the coco-nuts. Compared with those of the Pacific Islands, the local coco-nuts are small, but the shells and the flesh are thicker so that their yield is excellent.

Nearly everybody is engaged in some way in the preparation of copra. The work is made easier by a narrow-gauge railway worked by hand. The shells are opened by women with a light

I SLEEP ASHORE

chopper. The flesh is immediately laid out to dry under a roof which protects it from rain.

Charming, bright-looking children abound on the island, obviously the product of the island's second main industry. Children seem to grow, like the coco-palms, without any trouble; but their numbers constitute a problem, for the resources of the island are limited. There is considerable emigration to Borneo.

Every native has his boat, a necessary appurtenance for fishing and for going to work on the other islands. They are inspired by a type of Shetland canoe and are called *djukongs*, pointed, elegant, well built and fleet craft, though without sail.

I saw the place where *Spray* was careened. I missed meeting an old Malay who had known Slocum very well, as he had just departed for Borneo.

I spent one night on Home Island, a guest of Mr. Maclean. It was a long time since I had slept ashore, and it was a curious sensation, lying, clad in a sarong, in a huge, downy bed, while *Kurun* lay alone at Port Refuge in a strong trade wind.

Though whalers used to call at the islands in the past, few vessels do so nowadays. The only regular callers arrive twice a year. Occasionally a packet steamer comes by, but stops, without anchoring, only long enough to throw mail and food, well secured in barrels, overboard. Considering the paucity of the postal services, I was not surprised at being loaded with letters.

Yachts occasionally call at the Keeling Islands, but their visits are rare enough to make them events, which was why *Kurun*'s sail had been spotted so far away. I was told that boats have been known to miss the atoll, as it is not easily seen from the sea, and they kept on asking me how I had managed to find it so easily. Yet it is difficult to see how, with correct astronomical observations, one could very well miss it. It was thought, though, that *Seven Seas II*, belonging to Murnan, had done so, for she had been signalled from Christmas Island months before and had never appeared. I should have liked to have had news of her, for at New Guinea I had heard the story that her captain had been killed by unfriendly natives at the far end of the Gulf of Papua.

September 17th. After six days on the Cocos Islands, I set out in the afternoon. I was reasonably sure that with the strong trade wind I should be able to make a good crossing, though the

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violence of the wind was not too favourable. To set out under such conditions means that one's stomach is going to be hurled around and that one's face is going to be coated with salt. Throughout my stay, I had heard nothing but the shrill whistling of the wind; on board in the rigging, ashore in the coco-palms. The sea did not want to give me any rest.

If, on the day I set forth, the wind was a little less strong, the sea was white capped as far as the eye could see. I was not able to sleep as late as I should have liked that morning, for there were many things to be done. I was on deck at an early hour, repairing the upper lifeline on the starboard side, which I found had been eaten away by rust.

Loaded with gifts, I left my new friends. Dr. Watson was particularly heedful of my future diet: lettuces, radishes, aubergines, runner beans, new-laid eggs and—of course—coco-nuts. The Cable and Wireless Company presented me with a variety of provisions: biscuits, coffee, preserves. I was not likely to be short of food for some time to come!

I was handed a cable: the weather forecast specially drawn up for me at Perth in Australia. I returned to *Kurun* and got the pram on board. The young men of Cable and Wireless came to get up my anchor and set my mainsail. I hoisted my tricolour to the peak and it flapped prettily in the wind. Leigh Parkin, a talented colour photographer, filmed my departure.

I set No. 2 jib and made a sign to the young men to slip the mooring ropes from the float. Impatient, *Kurun* rapidly gathered way. It was 4.55 p.m.

I shook the last hands. *Kurun* was already on her way, the helm lashed at the right angle, and my new friends jumped over the rail to swim ashore. Now came the Admiralty launch, manned by the entire staff of the island, to escort me part of the way—a charming attention.

It was while all this was going on that I suddenly noticed something was missing—the aerial carnation that I had brought from the Canaries. Torres Strait and the strong winds of the Indian Ocean must have caused it to disintegrate.

CHAPTER XV

FROM COCOS KEELING TO RÉUNION

THE wind was fine and the bow was sending forth a powerful spray of clear lagoon water. I came to the 'blue patch', a stretch of water that was intensely blue, indicating that I had reached deeper water, and rounded the first buoy. When I checked away the main sheet, the launch could no longer keep up with me. I had entered the main passage and was making my way north-west.

I was immediately back in the swell. One more look at the beautiful lagoon that reminded me so much of the Pacific.

Flying fish of a large size (those of the Indian Ocean are the finest I ever saw) scattered before me and thousands of birds were busy on the shoals of fish that were swimming at the surface of the water. Together with the foaming sea, sparkling in the sun, the whole was a brilliant scene.

At 5.40 p.m., three quarters of a mile due north of the eastern point of Horsburgh Island, I streamed the log and set the cutter on the course I had marked on the chart. Having made the sheet of the boom staysail fast to the tiller, I let *Kurun* steer herself; she was to steer herself to perfection for most of the crossing.

With nightfall, land sank below the horizon; I lit the navigation light and went below to sleep; but, as so often recently, my sleep was uneasy.

Through the following days, the boat rolled and pitched but continued to run at a fine speed. It was a promising start. On September 18th (reckoning from Horsburgh Island which I had passed the previous day), I covered a hundred and twenty miles; on the 19th, a hundred and fifty, and the same number on the 20th.

Squalls, rain.

During the first twenty-four hours, the log ceased to function. I intended to haul it in later in the day. As I was observing the sun for the meridian, I noticed that the log line was rather slack and on inspection found that it had been cut again. I had once more lost rotator and sinker. As I had only one spare rotator left, I

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decided to do without a log for the rest of the voyage, and hauled in what was left of the line.

September 21st. Towards the end of the night, the wind eased and backed to the east. With the automatic steering, the boat was making a little too far south; after lunch I took over the helm to bring her back on the course. To steer a boat running before the wind, with more swell than wind, is a laborious task. Before long, the wind dropped altogether.

September 22nd. 1 a.m. I had to take in all sail.

6.25 a.m. Made sail again on a light wind from the south that freshened into a squall with rain.

8.40 a.m. A ship on the port bow. As I was to discover on intersecting her course, she was proceeding south-east by the compass, i.e. on the Suez—Fremantle route. She would reach Australia in a few days' time. No flag. No one on deck. At 9.10 a.m., she vanished in the drizzle.

Squalls. Rain. The temperature fell a few degrees.

As the wind freshened, I replaced No. 2 jib by No. 3 and took three rolls in the mainsail, receiving meanwhile a free and involuntary shower-bath. The sea was hard, straight on the beam, and *Kurun* was being ill-used. The whole of the rail vanished time and time again under water. The boat heeled and rolled wildly. Tons of water poured over the deck.

Except for the passage through Torres Strait, this was my most unpleasant period of navigation. Below, life was almost unbearable. To move about the cabin demanded acrobatics. I had not succeeded in stopping a slight leak in the deck near the support of the starboard shore-leg and I had hourly to remove the water that threatened to swamp the bunks. On deck, the plug of the bilge-pump was swept away by a heavy sea and I had to wedge it with a plank. But, in spite of these handicaps, *Kurun* was tearing along undaunted, solid as a rock.

For my lunch, I was preparing a delicious omelette. A sudden lurch and the eggs I was beating flew through the air. I wondered how a yacht built on classical lines, of the same size as *Kurun*, would have behaved in such weather: fresh wind and choppy swell. Could she sail at all? If so, how would the crew get along in her?

6 p.m. Another two rolls in the mainsail had to be taken in, for

JOBS TO BE DONE

the cutter was carrying too much sail. I tried to sleep, but in vain. It was impossible to stay in the bunk. I had not so far had to make use of the boards that could be fitted to prevent the occupant from rolling out of the bunk, and they were in the peak, somewhere under a vast mass of stores, and could not be got at easily. But to stay in the bunk at present, one would need to be nailed to the woodwork. I used the starboard bunk on the lee side, and with the strong list could clearly see the card of the reversed compass fixed on the port side.

September 25th. I woke up frozen and had to dig out a woollen blanket. Since Saturday, the 22nd, the temperature had been dropping steadily. In the cabin it was 68.2° F., and I had to go a long way back in my journal to find so low a reading. Even during the daytime, the temperature was low, its maximum being 74.3° F. It was in some ways a pleasant change, for it made the trade wind truly invigorating.

Squalls. Rain. The sea had become less choppy, however.

In the early hours of the night, the small binnacle lamp failed, and for the rest of the voyage it was to cause me endless trouble. Nor was the small American lamp I used in the ordinary way in too good a state, having been damaged by water. I could not find the new spare lamp that should have been in the forepeak. Some unscrupulous rogue had probably helped himself to it at Tahiti.

September 26th. I felt lazy. Stretched out on my bunk, I lay thinking of the various modifications I intended to have made on board while I was at Réunion: the forward hatch was going to be condemned; a solid piece of oak was to be put in place to strengthen the coaming aft; part of the deck must be caulked; the deep-sea anchor and its accessories had to be checked; the stays and the shrouds had to be renewed as they were getting too rusty; the lifeline must be replaced; an iron fitting had to be made for the staysail boom; and I could think of several other things. I also thought of all those naïve people who believe that on a voyage of this nature all one had to do was to sail and the boat would look after herself.

That night, the radio was remarkably clear. I was able to pick up dozens of stations. For the first time for several days, I got the W.W.V. time signal; this Washington signal is an endlessly repeated 'pip', a metronome beating out the seconds.

FROM COCOS KEELING TO RÉUNION

September 27th. During the morning, the sky cleared. I felt braver on this day; with the improvement in the weather, my pleasure in sailing returned. I did some repairs on deck and in the rigging, where I renewed a few kecklings. My mainsail had suffered a good deal; in spite of every precaution, it had worn sadly. Certain places had been so chafed that one could see right through the canvas. Poor 'Paimpolaise'! but it would have to last to Le Croisic. As the wind had eased to force 4, I took the rolls out of the mainsail.

5.15 p.m. A fine tropic-bird flew round the boat and I wondered how these birds contrive to remain out over the open sea, so far from land. They would seem to be as mad as some singlehanded navigators.

A fine sunset, which was unusual, for I expected heavy cloud as on other evenings. Gone were the magnificent skies of the Arafura Sea.

A change of hour. The difference with Greenwich had shrunk to five hours. Little by little, *Kurun* was encircling the globe with her wake.

I lit the navigation light and slept.

September 28th. Fine sunny day. I dried some of my things, including my store of dried fish, which had gone a little soft.

I had let my thoughts wander ahead again, to the Durban-Cape Town stretch with all its chances of running into gales, and I kept on imagining bad weather from the south-west in combination with the strong Agulhas current. The sea must be particularly bad there. I began to long for the time when I should have rounded the Cape. Although Irving Johnson, who had rounded it several times, had told me at Tahiti that the cruise was not so bad in the fine season, I hoped that I was going to have Bernicot's luck and do it in eight days as he did.

By sunset, the sky had assumed an ugly look. Plentiful alto-cumuli, particularly to the north-west. The sun sank in a mass of cloud, casting rays of sinister hues. The swell could hardly have been stronger. I surveyed the scene with some anxiety.

10.20 p.m. I woke. The wind had freshened and was whistling in the rigging. Squall. Rain. *Kurun* was yawning about.

Thrusting my head out of the hatch, I was thoroughly dowsed, an unpleasant awakening. It was high time to be taking in sail, so I slipped on a pullover and my oilskins and went on deck.

ROUGH TREATMENT

Laboriously I took four rolls in the mainsail; it was bellying hard in the wind. *Kurun* became more docile, but I got no more sleep that night.

September 29th. Squalls. My observations at noon had placed me about four hundred and thirty miles from Rodriguez. If the wind held, which it probably would, and if I were not delayed by a gale, I ought to be within sight of land on October 2nd and to arrive at Réunion maybe the Sunday after.

No lunch. Weary, I stayed in my bunk, which was none too steady.

4 p.m. Squall. Heavy south-south-east swell. The boat rolled and shipped some water.

6 p.m. Violent squalls. The sea was wild and things were looking bad. I took two more rolls in the mainsail. At dusk, before darkness had properly set in, the boat passed through a shoal of flying fish, of which several fell on deck, and I went and gathered them up. They rarely fall on deck in daylight, for they see the boat and avoid it. A little later, more fell on deck, but were washed away by the sea.

September 30th. Squalls. Black night. The boat rolled and shipped sea after sea. I dozed.

3 a.m. I was again thrown out of my bunk.

5.45 a.m. Wide awake. *Kurun* had come up into the wind and the staysail was flapping furiously. The sheet had parted, and the eyelet-fastening that held it had been torn right away. The clew had also given way. The chafing caused by the sheaves is considerable, which means that all ropes passing through blocks have to be renewed frequently. The solution is to use supple steel wire which does not chafe so much at the points of contact. With daylight, I got everything shipshape again. I was then afforded a very fine spectacle: a huge comber hurled itself upon the boat, submerging the cabin top, while the rail and the starboard gangway disappeared under water. It would have made a remarkably fine photograph.

It being Sunday, I took trouble over my lunch: grilled flying fish, omelette, buttered taros, with jam, and with it my last bottle of red wine.

October 1st. 6 a.m. I was able to take two more rolls out of the mainsail. The wind had eased and the weather had improved.

FROM COCOS KEELING TO RÉUNION

Before my early morning coffee, two tropic-birds came circling round the boat, merrily twittering as if to announce fine weather and the proximity of land. I greeted the sun by making the cabin top look like a second-hand stall, putting out, among other things, the starboard mattress to dry. I cleaned out the galley and washed every nook and cranny with fresh water, for there had been too much salt water in the cabin.

My midday observation put me within a hundred and sixty-five miles of Rodriguez. Too narrow a margin to count on a landfall the next day. Yet there was every hope of sighting the island in the afternoon.

October 2nd. A magnificent night, the sky radiant with constellations. The atmosphere was limpid. I went on deck to take observations of the stars. As I thought, I was a little too far north. I hauled the sheets and sailed a little closer to the wind, hoping to come within sight of land by lunch-time.

At about 8.30 a.m., some whales were making enormous leaps clear out of the water to windward of my course, but in view of the distance between us, I was unable to identify them. They seemed about as long as my boat.

Contrary to my usual practice, I had lunch before making my noon observations. I scanned the horizon purposefully, though I knew very well from past experience that visibility was not likely to exceed thirty miles. On the other hand, there was quite a mass of mammato-cumuli on the horizon.

At midday, I could no longer restrain my impatience, and before I had finished swallowing my last mouthful, I was climbing up the rigging. Nothing to be seen.

I made observations on the meridian and put my position on the chart. I ought to be able to see Rodriguez—just—merely a matter of a couple of miles' visibility. Again I climbed the mast, and stared hard in the exact direction. Still nothing.

After gazing for a few minutes, I saw a small bluish patch. Yes, there was no doubt about it. Rodriguez was there, and once again, as with every landfall, I experienced the joy of seeing land exactly where my observations and calculations had indicated. The swell being a hindrance to visibility, it would be a while before I could see land from the deck.

It was not unpleasant to be back at the helm. The weather was

KURUN DISTINGUISHES HERSELF

agreeable and the sun magnificent. The heat was not the oppressive heat of the Pacific or the Arafura Sea, and the trade wind had a reviving quality.

And there was Rodriguez, in sight less than a fortnight after I had left the Cocos Keeling Islands. Contentment welled up in me. This stretch, with its ever-blown wind, had taken the great masters of single-handed navigation in *Spray* and *Anahita* longer than a fortnight, even though their boats had been larger and faster, for speed increases proportionately to length at the water-line. Slocum and Bernicot mention that their boats could achieve up to nine knots, whereas the maximum speed of *Kurun* never exceeded seven knots by very much, and then only in very exceptional circumstances. Without making it my particular aim, I had nevertheless achieved an exceptionally good run. Bravo, little *Kurun*!

By keeping a little too close to the wind, I had lost a good deal of speed. I would not be near the coast until night-time. Twilight came just as the contours of the island were beginning to show.

At 6 p.m., I made the boomed staysail sheet fast to the tiller in order to return to my course and to avoid the reef that surrounds the island a few miles offshore by a sufficient safety margin. As evening advanced, I could see the lights of Port Mathurin—the island's chief village—going on. To leeward of the island, I appreciated the beauty of the evening, though feeling a little regretful that I could not land. Had I been a few hours earlier, I might have been able to signal my presence to the cable station for transmission to Cocos Island.

I reckoned on being within sight of Réunion on Saturday, and I wondered what my chances were of reaching Port des Galets in time to get my mail. Devoutly I hoped that I should not lose the trade wind.

Having succeeded in eluding the dangers of Rodriguez, I prepared myself a bowl of broth, lit the navigation light, and went below.

October 3rd. Fine trade wind weather. Plenty of sunshine. The sea disturbed. *Kurun* lay perfectly steady. Sailing was a delight.

October 4th. The trade wind held steady and my speed remained excellent. The weather was fine. At midday, I found I had covered a hundred and forty miles in twenty-four hours. I expected to be

FROM COCOS KEELING TO RÉUNION

sighting Mauritius by the following dawn, if not before, and Pointe des Galets by Saturday afternoon.

I went below at 8 p.m. and set the alarm clock for midnight because I wanted to keep an eye on the landfall, but sleep refused to come.

9.22 p.m. A sea came over, and as the cabin hatch was wide open it swamped the galley and the cabin floor, not sparing even the little shelf on which I kept precious things such as the battery lamp, the matches and my knife. I got up, cursing, to undo all this mischief. I had not expected such a sly assault in this fine weather.

October 5th. Night very fine. Excellent visibility. For my watch, I found it necessary to dress warmly to prevent myself from getting cold: long trousers, striped pullover, jersey and my thick Kriegsmarine overcoat. My precision thermometer at the after end of the cabin read 71.6° F. My reactions to temperatures had certainly changed.

About 1.30 a.m., I thought I could see a glow to starboard.

At 1.40 a.m., from the masthead, I could definitely see a lighthouse. As I had no detailed chart, or a manual of lighthouses, I could not be definite in identifying it, but I imagined it was the lighthouse of Grand Port.

The wind was blowing in gusts.

By 4 a.m., I could begin to guess at land masses: the island of Mauritius. With dawn, the coastline became visible.

At 6 a.m., my observations placed me within eleven miles S. 14 W. of the south-east point of the island. I sailed by eye along the coast without consulting the compass much. Soon I could see the powerful spray of Pointe du Souffleur rising to a considerable height. I was longing to reach Port des Galets and get my mail. The sunlight gradually brought colour into the scene. I could see two peaks, one of them the famous Pieter Botte. They reminded me a little of Huapu of the Marquesas, but only a little, for here was neither the tormented savagery nor the majestic splendour of the Pacific Islands. The Isle of Mauritius has the appearance of an amiable civilization; it was plain that the hand of man had left its impress on it.

At 8 a.m., I marked my position on the chart. Towards the east, the atmosphere was remarkably pure and limpid. Rising clear

A MYSTERIOUS CRY

above the horizon I saw a characteristic outline: Réunion? Was that possible at a distance of over a hundred miles?

Splendid weather. I gazed at every detail of Mauritius and could perceive houses and villages as well as fields of sugar cane which, to a considerable height, appeared as green patches.

8.32 a.m. I had been below writing for a few minutes when suddenly I heard, as if coming from the deck, a distinct cry, 'Oh! Oh!' Mystified, I rushed to the hatch. No one on deck—no one anywhere near. *Kurun* was quite alone, peacefully sailing along; nothing but sky, sea and silence. And yet I could have sworn that I had heard a human voice. Was it a cry from beyond the seas? Had the rigging groaned? Sudden mysterious plaints have been known to shatter the vast silence of the sea.

9.15 a.m. I was not mistaken earlier about Réunion: its high peaks were plainly visible.

To the west, the sky was a pure cloudless blue. Visibility was astonishingly good, but as the sun rose higher, everything returned to normal and Réunion vanished from sight.

At 10 a.m., I was about thirteen miles to the south of Cape Brabant, at the western extremity of the south coast of Mauritius. I took a few photographs of the Morne, a fine, isolated hill, flat-topped, which rises at the lower end of the cape.

Towards sunset, the high peaks of Réunion could be seen again.

11.57 p.m. Lighthouse at half a point on the port bow.

October 6th. I steered, running before the wind. The night was fine, but the wind unfortunately was light.

At 3.45 a.m., the dark, high mass of the island became visible. With daylight, details gradually became clearer, and Réunion, with its peaks rising over ten thousand feet high, asserted its majestic presence. The scene made me very conscious of the extraordinary charm of an early morning landfall, especially after weeks alone at sea. At such moments, the solitary navigator is in close rapport with the beauty of the universe, and in the silence feels himself the equal of the gods.

6.10 a.m. The wind shifted to the south-west. The weather was fine, *Kurun* hardly stirred. I felt strangely happy.

Ashore, people were moving about. I surveyed the land through my glasses. Houses, roads, factories, clearly demarcated fields—all revealed the life of man in miniature. Over the island lay a slight

FROM COCOS KEELING TO RÉUNION

haze. Along the coast, I should be able to navigate by sight, for it presented no dangers other than the Cousin between Sainte Suzanne and Sainte Marie.

8.37 a.m. I was due north of Bel Air lighthouse and within three quarters of a mile of it.

A few fishermen in rowing boats were offshore and I purposely passed very close to one of them. Did he know, I enquired, whether the post office at Port des Galets would be open that afternoon? The good man was a little surprised but answered that it would.

The freshening wind shifted to the east and *Kurun* was able to put on a little speed for her coastline trip. Before long, I could identify Saint Denis, which, from a distance, had a pleasing look; at close quarters it gave the impression of being a town closed to the ocean, ringed round with an unattractive sandy beach. Its buildings, with their backs turned on the sea, had a ramshackle air, and I could see a station and one of the earliest railway engines that can ever have been devised. I may say that when I went ashore, the town did not strike me as too bad.

10.25 a.m. I passed Cape des Jardins, which lies in front of the town, fairly close, and then some ruins. Not a soul to be seen. Cape Bernard, however, rising sheer from the sea to a height of a thousand feet, wild and austere, had a noble look. It occurred to me that this wall of stone might play tricks with the wind, and I did not venture in too close.

In Possession Bay, the coast became flatter, so that, as I approached Pointe des Galets, I could see the masts and bridges of the vessels in the harbour which opens to the west.

I was making for the shingle beach, which was close to the harbour entrance, when the wind dropped, leaving only the current to carry me along. I was annoyed. Was I going to miss making the harbour entrance? Or was I going to drift into the big tanker that lay anchored south of the entrance? The water was too deep for me to think of anchoring.

A few haphazard puffs of wind. I began sculling. Lighters were going in and out of the harbour and a dredger was noisily at work in the channel. I was not to know that a tidal wave had recently blocked up the harbour entrance, and that the vessels in the harbour were imprisoned by a mass of shingle.

I GET A SURPRISE

I edged along the narrow channel. The tugs and lighters, manned by stupid looking natives, took not the slightest notice of me, and I began to be afraid that they might inadvertently crush me. In the outer harbour, I quickly took in all sail and got down to sculling in all earnest.

I had no plan of this harbour and no views, therefore, on the choice of anchorage; I decided on the south basin and crept between the towering walls of two cargo boats, the *Taurus* and the *Ville de Majunga*, until I came to rest at the far end of the basin.

An elegantly dressed man gave some instructions to a launch, which thereupon came over and offered to assist me. I declined help, put my ropes ashore and moored. It was 1.40 p.m.

On leaving Tahiti, I had reckoned on arriving at Réunion on October 15th, even if it meant driving *Kurun* hard. And here I was on the 6th. I had assuredly gained a victory over time.

As I stepped ashore, I was warmly welcomed by Commander Fournage, the commercial manager of the port, and by young Dr. Destombes. I knew no one on the island, and I had not imagined that *Kurun* would be expected, so that this reception was a pleasant surprise.

After collecting my mail, which I was longing to read, and after handing in all the mail that had been entrusted to me, I went to the doctor's place and had a shower. It was a treat, after so long a time out, to be able to use as much fresh water as I wanted.

Throughout my stay, I was to be Commander Fournage's guest. He was a former submarine commander and had retired from the French Navy to take up his present post.

Kurun had been able to enter port owing to her small size. The big vessels in the basins were immobilized, one of them having been there for more than a month. Those outside were waiting to go in. The tidal wave, in its violence, had shifted so vast a mass of shingle that the channel had been reduced to the depth of one fathom.

Réunion is not a particularly favoured harbour from a maritime point of view, whereas Mauritius, which England has retained, has a number of natural shelters and harbours that lend themselves to maritime activity. Réunion has a most inhospitable coastline: not a bay, not one natural shelter in which a boat can find safety in all weathers. So poor are conditions there that to construct an

FROM COCOS KEELING TO RÉUNION

artificial harbour would be a task of considerable magnitude. Port des Galets is an inadequate solution, a makeshift arrangement. The harbour is precarious, having to be constantly dredged, and is always at the mercy of a sudden blockage such as I had encountered. As the harbour is the island's lung, these conditions present a serious economic problem.

The beauty of the island rests in its mountain, but I was surprised to find a vegetation that was in no way comparable to that of other tropical isles. Man, aiming at disciplining nature, has carried out considerable deforestation. Only the interior has retained its original beauty.

MM. Cornu and Hugot organized a three-day excursion into the mountains in my honour. We went to the plateau of Cilaos by car, driving along an accidented and picturesque road, and I was reminded of Captain Bernicot's account of a similar trip, where he speaks of a chauffeur 'taking corners heeling over to a beam wind'—which is not entirely a joke, for life in a small boat in heavy weather strikes me as considerably less dangerous than rushing along the roads of Réunion in a car. In places, the bends are so terrifying that to get round them takes several attempts, backing the car each time and trying over and over again—like very awkward tacking.

We had to cross the river eighteen times. It flows between enormous rocks, and each time we crossed it we found the fresh and limpid water pleasantly cooling to our feet. On one occasion, however, I cooled myself all over through losing my balance. There I was, having safely crossed several oceans, floundering in a trickle of fresh water.

In the harbour, I was accepted as one of the great family of mariners, and I was often the guest of captains of ships in port, especially my compatriots MM. Menguy and Depagne, who helped me to get my boat shipshape in many ways.

The carpenter of the *Ville de Majunga*, an old sailor from the banks of the Rance, who went by the charming name of Sweet Jesus, put his heart and soul into doing a number of small repairs on board *Kurun*. He had worked in the *Winibelle* of Marin Marie; his vast experience was invaluable to me.

Owing to the kindness of Commander Fournage, the dangerously oxydised lifelines were replaced by lengths of stainless steel

MY STOWAWAY DESERTS

wire from the harbour workshops. A proper boom for the staysail was made, with suitable iron fittings, to replace my improvised arrangement; it was to prove most useful and practical. New stays were put in place and all the twin buckles were overhauled and greased. I checked every inch of the rigging.

I also took drastic action to rid the boat of the vermin that infested her, moving everything I could and spraying every nook and cranny with D.D.T. from a twelve pound pressure jet. It was a major operation, and the result was correspondingly efficient. In one fell swoop, copra insects and cockroaches became a thing of the past.

Joseph had deserted before I began the disinfectant drive. The air of Réunion must have pleased him. Let us hope that he found a suitable mate; after his prolonged trip in my boat, I could fully understand any inclinations he might have that way. And his tact was admirable. Silently he had joined the crew; silently he had lived on board; silently he departed. Dear old Joseph! What tales of the sea he will have to tell the lizards of Bourbon.

CHAPTER XVI

FROM RÉUNION TO DURBAN AND THE CAPE

November 11th. Friends on the island had come to say goodbye. One of them brought me a small cactus. 'It will go with you to France,' he said. And indeed it did, and in perfect condition. With the cabin a bower of flowers and plants, *Kurun* looked like the garden lounge of a luxury liner. Commander Fournage's little girl came to put a little rubber dog in my cabin; it could be twisted into the funniest shapes. She insisted that it should be my mascot.

I was just about to get under way when the harbour master arrived in his launch, bringing me a fine length of new rope. 'You'll need it to moor at Durban. The tide is very strong there,' he assured me.

3.20 p.m. I cast off. Gently the small launch towed the ten and a half tons of *Kurun*; she lay nicely on the water. At the entrance to the basin, I made sail.

As I was passing the harbour master's office, the wireless operator of the *Ville de Tamatave* called me: 'The weather forecast is bad. I have a telegram for you.' The telegram was brought me by the pilot launch; sent by the *Ville du Havre*, which had left two days before, it gave an account of the bad weather she had run into—a very thoughtful attention on the part of Captain Depagne.

I set the jib. *Kurun* was in the channel, close-hauled on the port tack; light breeze. It would have been difficult to get out of the channel under sail alone. The pilot launch saluted me with three toots on her klaxon and I responded with three blasts on my foghorn. The two launches turned back and I was once more alone at sea.

Porpoises came and played round the stem, parading along the surface. It would have been easy enough to harpoon them and instinctively my hand went to the harpoon, but my better self forbade me to indulge my impulse.

At 8.35 p.m., I set every sail. Calm. I was no more than seven and a half miles from Pointe des Galets.

MADAGASCAR TO STARBOARD

November 12th. I stayed awake all night, relaxing only for an hour just before daylight. At 6.10 a.m., I made sail again with a north-east wind, but did not get far and soon lay becalmed once more.

The island looked beautiful in the morning light.

Having taken in all sail, I had plenty of leisure to watch a dorado swimming round the boat, its colours resplendent in the calm, transparent water. The heat was stifling. Just before midday, I had a bath under the bobstay, but very cautiously, for a little while before I had seen an ugly-looking dark mass in the water that might well have been a shark.

By lunch-time, a light wind made it possible to make sail. The boom of the staysail was now completely satisfactory.

The coastline was slowly dissolving in the bluish darkness of the evening. Just before nightfall, I fixed my position with the sextant to mark my point of departure on the chart.

The log, which I had carefully repaired before leaving Réunion, was now working perfectly.

All the way to Madagascar, I was to meet with varying weather conditions. After a period of calm, the wind blew from the south-east. Except for one day, I did not cover a great distance in any twenty-four hours.

November 16th. At 12.28 p.m., I saw land to starboard. It was veiled, as is so often the case in these latitudes, by dense curtains of rain. I decided to make my landfall a little north on account of the strong current that is supposed to run south.

Not one point of the coast was clearly identifiable. The land was nothing but a slight dab of grey, differing only a little from the grey that covered the whole western horizon. I had no inclination to go any nearer, for the wind, weak enough as it was, might fail altogether at any moment. The swell was strong, and I had no detailed chart of the region; in any case, its hydrography is most uncertain.

Late in the afternoon, I saw a sea bird considerably larger than any I had ever seen. I presumed it was an albatross; I had heard, I seemed to recollect, that they travel as far north as the south of Madagascar.

November 17th. The cutter was steering herself, yet there was no question of sleep. Nights near land are sleepless nights, for the single-hander.

FROM RÉUNION TO DURBAN AND THE CAPE

2.05 a.m. I sighted the lighthouse of Point Itaperina. With daylight, having passed the point, I changed my course. Land could be guessed at rather than seen.

Another albatross came and flew round the boat, a magnificent bird, but a harbinger of bad weather. The wind freshened.

The sky had an ugly look that worried me. At 10.20 a.m., my forebodings were borne out: the barometer fell, whereas at that time of the day the barometric tide should be showing a maximum. A nightmare sky, similar to those that precede cyclones. Wind increasing.

At 10.50 a.m., I took in all sail, afraid lest I should be unable to do so if I waited any longer. As I was taking in the jib, the halyard slipped through my fingers, flaying the skin. With very sore hands, I had to struggle with No. 2 jib, which fell into the sea. What a life!

Laboriously I took in the flapping mainsail and made the gaskets fast round it. This task done, I proceeded on my way under the head sails only, sailing south toward the open sea.

The barometer continued to fall steadily, a bad sign. In theory, no cyclones occurred at this time in this region, but my faith in statistics was not unbounded.

The wind had attained force 7, and the sky looked worse than ever.

Late that afternoon, the wind rose almost to a gale. The sea began to heave in huge over-toppling rollers. I made sure that everything on deck and in the cabin was secure, and put some leather round the jib sheets.

The sunset was menacing. An eerie light shone through copper-hued clouds. The barometer was still falling. I should have preferred to be peacefully moored in a safe harbour.

After night had fallen, I tried to pick up weather forecasts on my radio, but without success. All I got was Radio Tananarive telling me that important horse-races were going to be held on the next day, that the course was sodden so that doubts were entertained, etc., etc. But nothing about the weather.

I surveyed the sky for a long time, for if the wind freshened much more, it would be unsafe to continue running before it.

November 18th. The wind had cased, and at 8.35 a.m., I proceeded on my course with all sails set, continuing so until late in

FLYING FISH WEATHER

the morning, when I took four rolls in the mainsail owing to a strong north-east wind getting up. The boat shipped a huge sea.

That afternoon, the wind dropped. In the evening, the sky cleared. The stars were brilliant and the wake of the boat was phosphorescent.

November 19th. The morning was beautiful, the sky clear, but remembering the old sailor's saying I wanted to see more of this fine weather before trusting it.

Numerous schools of fishes were surfacing, making the water swirl by their very numbers. Over the schools, birds were busy. I rigged a line.

It looked as if the fine weather had returned to stay. I dried some things on the deck. The sun was warm, but devoid of the oppressive heat I had experienced between the tropics (I had now crossed the Tropic of Capricorn). The air was balmy and vivifying.

The log indicated a speed of less than two and a half knots, but it was now so pleasant on board that I had lost the feeling of urgency about reaching Durban.

One after the other, I lost two lines to very large fish.

A wonderful night, the stars glittering, the sky clear and pure. The yachting of one's dreams.

The weather continued like that for several days, with variable winds, light winds and occasional calms, so that the distance covered was minimal.

November 23rd. 9.10 a.m. I was a little surprised to see a steamer abeam the starboard beam, overtaking me. I assumed she was bound for the Cape, on her way from Mauritius or Madagascar.

The fine weather was holding, the real 'flying fish weather' which my friend Bob the Trader had wished me when I set sail from Taiohae. But speed wasn't in the picture; *Kurun* dragged along. If this continued, I doubted whether I should make Durban before the end of the month. Not that it was surprising in any way. I had left the region of trades to enter that of tropical or rather sub-tropical calm, known for its variable and light winds.

The Pilot Charts gave a poor picture of the situation. The general conditions I encountered were very different from those indicated. This kind of weather was more suitable for racing yachts. It made *Kurun* heavy, insufficiently provided with sail,

FROM RÉUNION TO DURBAN AND THE CAPE

sluggish, unable to avail herself of what breaths of wind there were. She needed at least a mainsail of the normal large size, a topsail and a balloon jib. After having carefully folded and stored the latter sail while at Port des Galets, I had sworn to myself that I would not get it out again before I had rounded the Cape. And the longer I took over my present lap, the greater was my chance of catching a packet or two before I reached Durban. It would be only natural.

I finished the lard that Mrs. Angermeyer had given me as I left Academy Bay in the Galapagos a year before.

November 25th. The weather was still fine, but Father Aeolus seemed to have woken up. By midday, there was a steady wind blowing from the north, force 5.

Late in the afternoon, I was sailing with four rolls in the mainsail and No. 3 jib. The glass had been falling since the day before. The wind was freshening.

At 6.15 p.m., weather conditions were such that I took in all sail. The glass was still falling. The wind seemed to be the classical gale from the north-east of which I had heard so much. The excellent descriptions I had read declared that it would not be dangerous and would ease before it reached actual gale force. The snag was that a harmless gale from the north-east was likely to be followed by a gale from the south-west, a much more violent gale that would rise with brutal suddenness; this south-wester was supposed to reach full velocity in a few minutes' time while the sky was clouding over. Which was why, as night fell, I had taken all sail in—a precautionary measure.

8 p.m. North-north-east wind, force 7. *Kurun* lay under bare poles and broadside on to the sea. I stayed awake and watchful.

10 p.m. The wind fell slightly. The barometer remained steady. At midnight, I noticed that it had gone up half a point.

November 26th. Half an hour after midnight, the wind dropped. Clouds from the south-west covered the sky. The classical sequence of events. The glass rose sharply. I awaited the attack.

Ten minutes later it came. Suddenly and with violence, blowing from the south-west. The main storm sail was ready to be set, but the weather did not develop as I had expected. The wind blew from the south-south-east and by daybreak did not exceed force 5, with stronger gusts.

GALES FROM ALL QUARTERS

I had started on my way again, but only under the head sails and main storm sail, for I still did not trust the look of the weather. After a few hours of calm, the wind shifted to the north and the barometer rose. The same sequence of events followed as on the previous day. In my bunk I dozed, unable to sleep properly, for I was expecting the south-west gale.

November 27th. At 8 a.m., the barometer had reached its minimum, after which the wind eased and shifted north-north-west, north-west, and west.

5.10 a.m. After having dropped completely, the wind leapt to the south-west and freshened violently. But at this point events differed from those on the previous days. In a few minutes, there was a proper gale blowing. The sea was like a seething cauldron, spray everywhere. I heard myself exclaiming, 'What am I in for?' I hove-to on the starboard tack, under the mainsail only, the tiller lashed amidships.

Gale, heavy seas, poor visibility. Nothing to do but wait for it to blow itself out.

The next day, I was becalmed. The wind got up in the north in the late afternoon. The heavy swell was chafing the rigging.

November 30th. Gale from the north-north-east. Heavy sea. Hove-to on the port tack.

The sea was white with foam, which the wind, howling in the rigging, was angrily lashing about. It blew hard enough to skin the devil. *Kurun*, hove-to with the mainsail six rolls down and the small jib sheeted to windward, was carrying too much sail. It was too late to do anything about it, however. I had had to hook a stout tackle to the boom to prevent it snapping in the savage wind. The tackle was made fast just by the leech of the mainsail.

Though the boat heeled considerably, her balance was excellent. *Kurun* was steady and lay-to perfectly, like a duck. And it was a gale worthy of the name.

Yet, on the following day, I was able to proceed on my way with a pleasant south-west breeze.

My observations gave me a pleasant surprise. I had feared I was much further south than I actually was, for the observations I had made in the heavy swell of the previous day had not been particularly reliable. Hove-to in a gale, it is practically impossible to make accurate observations from a small boat. As so often

FROM RÉUNION TO DURBAN AND THE CAPE

happened, the current indicated by the nautical documents was absolutely non-existent.

In the afternoon, I managed to dry a few clothes, after washing them in fresh water, but later that afternoon the weather worsened again. Squalls, rain, thick weather.

11 p.m. A glow on the port bow: probably Durban. Astern, the white light of a steamer. *Kurun* was going well, close-hauled, her mainsail rolled down two turns, with the wind from the south-south-west, velocity 5. The steamer did not overtake me until midnight, when it passed, a short distance on the starboard beam.

December 2nd. At the helm. I expected to reach Durban this day, a very few hours after the ship that had overtaken me.

In spite of thick clothes and hot drinks, I felt cold, so that at 2.30 a.m. I lashed the helm and went below where it was dry.

With daylight, I saw land for a moment, in between two squalls; it was grey and vague, and I had no idea of the exact place.

6.20 a.m. Violent squall and downpour. I took in the staysail and took down another roll in the mainsail. Visibility nil. Two hours later, however, I caught sight of land again. Sailing close-hauled, I was approaching a coast of which I could see only odd bits. Without a detailed chart, I could only guess what it was on the basis of the indications contained in the Nautical Instructions; the landscape was one of hills and houses. I judged I must be near the mouth of the River Tongaat, so I kept the place slightly to starboard. The sea was getting less as I drew nearer land; I decided to keep on the same tack until I was within a mile or a mile and a half of the shore.

The landscape was growing clearer and I could see more details, but the weather was deteriorating again. A heavy squall was coming up over the horizon. I kept my eye on it, but did not hurry to take in sail until I realized there was more in that squall than met the eye.

I took in the staysail and secured it carefully; I rolled down yet another turn in the mainsail. The squall by this time was upon me, and a violent one it was.

11.35 a.m. Having failed to tack, I wore and headed for the open sea, for the going was getting too difficult. The land had

A WET SUNDAY AT SEA

vanished and visibility was nil. This change in the weather worried me. Was I going to run into this strong gale so close inshore? I had changed my course when I was about two and a half miles offshore. If the wind were to back south-east, I should without doubt be cast ashore.

12 o'clock midday. Hard wind from the south-west. Squalls, rain, choppy sea. The boat was shipping enormous seas and pitching terribly. What a Sunday! I was wet. I was cold. I lacked the courage even to try to cook. The cold worried me more than anything. I had a bowl of steaming broth and helped myself to a generous ration of papaw-jam, followed by a strong tot of rum.

The wind had grown to a gale. I feared the jib might be carried away, for it was nearing the end of its career, even though, at Cocos Keeling, it had been given a new head-rope, a new clew and new eyelets.

By 3 p.m., the gale had dropped its violent gusts. All day, squalls and rain. I made a few tacks. With the onset of night, I was becalmed.

I lay in my bunk, fully dressed, and in spite of hot drinks I could not get warm. Everything was either wet or damp. I had not seen the thermometer so low for a long time: 66.2° F.

10 p.m. The sky suddenly cleared. On going on deck, I was surprised to see a quantity of lights within a few miles: the northern part of the city of Durban, the invisible and inaccessible! Anyone would have sworn that *Kurun* would have been securely anchored there the next day. Going by the nearness of those lights, I certainly should.

By 10.30 p.m., the wind had risen, blowing straight into my teeth. I hove-to, heading out to sea, and went below to my bunk. I was frozen and sleepy. I decided that if I stayed at the helm any longer, I was sure to catch a cold. That, at any rate, was my excuse.

December 3rd. Having dozed a little, I pressed on with the first light of dawn. Squalls, rain and occasional calm. With a head wind, it was laborious beating.

At 8.35 a.m., going about at not more than two miles and a half from the shore, I noticed that I was at a point a few miles further north, i.e. to leeward, than I had been the day before. I was off my

FROM RÉUNION TO DURBAN AND THE CAPE

course, all my own fault for staying below during the night. There was probably a coastal counter-current that had carried me northward.

Rain without wind all day—only an occasional puff of air. Depressing weather.

At 3 p.m., the Bluff came in sight, much blunted. The Bluff is the high wooded peninsula which marks the southern entrance to Durban. To the north, the coastline is very flat.

A few birds came flying round *Kurun* as she was dancing gently on the swell. I threw them some pieces of biscuit, which they gobbled appreciatively.

At night, the lights of Durban and the lighthouse of Natal Bluff were clearly visible. In spite of the proximity of all those lights, it was plain that I should have to spend another night at sea.

10.50 p.m. I proceeded on my course with a light wind from the north-east. I was drawing gradually nearer, but an eternity passed before I saw the lights of the channel. Durban is a city of lights that extend for miles and miles, and suddenly the many-coloured advertisements in blazing illumination dazzled my eyes—it was a startling transition from the solitude of the sea.

11 p.m. The wind shifted to the north-west and freshened. This time I was going to make it. Soon the green light of the channel was in sight.

Midnight. I put the binnacle timepiece an hour back, so that now I differed from Greenwich by only two hours.

It was pleasant to be back in Africa. A year and a half ago I had left it, sailing west. Still sailing west, I had returned to it from the east. *Kurun* had wound a wake of some magnitude round the world.

In spite of my thick coat, I was cold, but I had to remain at the helm to negotiate the channel—to the south-west by the compass. A huge fish leaped out of the water near the boat.

December 4th. At eight minutes past midnight, I passed the end of the southern jetty. Soon I was under the lee of the northern jetty. The water was without a ripple, which may have been due to a layer of fuel oil. Quickly and silently, *Kurun* glided forward.

At five minutes to one, the launch of the Water Police made me fast to an enormous buoy and wished me a good night. I went below to sleep in peace.

With the dawn, I was back on deck. It was cold, but the fine

AUTOPSY ON THE MAST

weather had returned with a fresh north-east wind. I could have done with that a day or so before.

Through my glasses, I inspected the harbour and the town; both seemed vast, and the small *Kurun* appeared utterly lost. All the same, I hoisted my colours, together with the Q flag, as I wished to ask for pratique.

The authorities did not react until late in the morning hours. First the launch of the Water Police came to offer me a tow to the Yacht Club whenever I wanted it. Then other launches came to carry out various formalities with a minimum of bother. To my amazement, two specialists, one of them an entomologist, called—to perform an autopsy on the mast. Its history had been told in an article that had appeared a few days before, announcing the forthcoming arrival of *Kurun* from Réunion.

The two experts set to work with their instruments, tapping and inspecting the worm galleries. They seemed to find a lot to interest them, for they were still at it when the launch of the Water Police came to take me in tow. Unfortunately, there were some slight waves, and one of the specialists had to be stretched out on a bunk.

After a fine trip through the sunny harbour, I anchored in front of the Yacht Club. After lunch, I called on the French Consul, M. Ratton, who received me most cordially.

The following day, I ran into some difficulties with the customs. I ought to have called on them within two hours of arrival, and as I hadn't, I was liable to a fine. Everything was settled satisfactorily by the filling up of a vast mass of forms. One of the less pleasant formalities with which I had to comply was the handing over of arms. The argument of the authorities was: 'There are many thieves here,' but it struck me as a curious method of protection to take away one's fire-arms.

The big modern city of Durban covers an enormous area. It is not a dense agglomeration, and is indeed what people call a fine city. The centre is the business quarter, the residential districts being in the suburbs where people live in pleasant houses, among flowers. I enjoyed chatting with the coloured people in the harbour, athletic Zulus and Indians in native dress, a real contact of interest as they live quite apart from European quarters.

One day I got into conversation with an Indian. By the time we had been chatting for ten minutes, he was so overcome at my

FROM RÉUNION TO DURBAN AND THE CAPE

talking to him as equal to equal, that he took off a gold ring he was wearing and tried to give it to me. Naturally I refused. ‘Are there truly other Europeans who think like you?’ he exclaimed in amazement. The assurance that there were seemed to give him great pleasure and even comfort.

I often bought postage stamps for the negroes, as they were not allowed to enter the post office. I did it to demonstrate my fellow-feeling, an attitude with which they were not very familiar.

Objectively, it is difficult to judge the whites too severely; they are no worse than they are elsewhere, but, as Pascal puts it, they have chosen a certain course. On the human plane, the situation offers no practical solution.

Among the sports practised in South Africa, yachting occupies an honourable place. Durban has two yacht clubs: the Royal Natal Yacht Club and the Point Yacht Club. At first, I was a little surprised at not seeing any proper sea-going boats apart from some large motor launches. In general, their yachts are one design boats with centre-board. The reason is simple: in a country, the coastline of which is inhospitable and the weather unstable and subject to the most abrupt changes, sailing is very dangerous. In the newspapers, I read of the damage that had been caused by the recent storms that I had just come through.

At Durban, boats of less than thirty-five feet are forbidden to leave the roads. Some smaller boats have been granted permits to do so, but only when they are fitted with two auxiliary engines.

The roads are criss-crossed by white-sailed craft. Every week, there are keenly contested races. It is not a rare occurrence for the boats to be dismasted and for the crews to return to port soaked from head to foot.

Among the Europeans who welcomed me at Durban were the Catholic missionaries, the majority of whom are French, and most of them Breton.

I often saw Father L’Hénoret. He came originally from Guilvinec, a small fishing harbour in Brittany, and was a veteran in the field. Before he became a missionary, he had been a cabin-boy in his father’s boat. He was a genuinely human priest. At St. Anthony’s Church, he saw to the spiritual needs of his Indians. He had met Bernicot and he showed me some photographs he had taken of *Anahita* when she was at Durban. It was through him

THE CIRCUMNAVIGATING BEETLES

that I visited a number of missions and went for a wonderful jaunt in the Thousand Hills, the native reserve where whites are not allowed to live.

In Natal, there are many immigrants from Mauritius, enough to form a colony at Durban. Among them, I met an old lady who had known Slocum and had been on board *Spray*. She was not the only one, for a restaurant keeper who had lived in South Africa since 1901 told me an identical story over a plate of chips.

Kurun too had her visitors. Nearly every day, Indians came fishing in the vicinity of my boat. We became very friendly and had many a talk, and I used to give them rice, which was unprocurable in Natal. I often met an old Indian, a noble-featured man who led a life of silent toil and exemplary piety. I also met an old Hindu who had for a long time been secretary to Gandhi.

In the harbour, I had been warned against theft: the coloured scum, I was told, were not to be trusted. One night, I woke up and heard someone trying to force an entry into my cabin. As a rule, I kept the cabin hatch open, but that night it was closed as I had been painting it. I got up and went to the fore hatch and peered out—to see a white. The man did not stop to argue the point. He fled.

Kurun was needing a great deal of attention. The mast would have to be replaced—the specialists agreed with me there. Their first diagnosis had been: wood-boring beetle. Later they picked on *hetrus bustrycus*. I got hold of some specimens that were preserved in alcohol and kept them until, after my homecoming, I showed them to M. B. Budker, the assistant director of the Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle. He identified them as *hylotrupes bajulus*, the house capricorn beetle. As this capricorn is not a tropical insect but a denizen of our own temperate climate, it was obvious that the insects had been in the wood before I sailed from Le Croisic. A fine trip round the world I had given them.

The director of an important shipyard, himself an ardent yachtsman, offered to have a new mast made for me for the cost of the labour expended on the making. I began by accepting his kind offer, but, on thinking the matter over, I realized that too many things were involved, and changed my mind. I made another examination of the mast and decided that it would last until my homecoming. In any case, the damaged part—from the foot

FROM RÉUNION TO DURBAN AND THE CAPE

to about six feet above the deck—worked under compression and it was unlikely to buckle.

I repainted and varnished the deck. As was my habit, I checked the rigging carefully and replaced all doubtful parts. I was expecting to run into strong winds as I went south.

It was necessary to careen the boat. Mr. Wittle of the shipyard offered to have *Kurun* lifted out of the water free. On January 28th, she was hoisted out of the water and I was able to begin scraping. In spite of the few shell-fish that had attached themselves to the hull during my stay in port, the underwater was in fine condition, which pleased me, as I had not scrubbed *Kurun* for eight months and had been in tropical waters throughout that period.

The next day, having finished my scraping, I washed down the hull with a jet of fresh water. The plastic paint being fairly pasty, it took me quite a time to get it on. I was helped by two negroes and never have I seen people smear paint around as they did.

That afternoon, *Kurun* was once more afloat. Having replenished the fresh water casks, I tied up at the Club jetty. Everything had gone with remarkable speed. The next time the keel of *Kurun* touched ground she would be on the soil of France.

The more civilized the country, the more complicated is departure. There were endless customs formalities. The bad-tempered official who had dealt with my arrival was now dealing with my departure. After having affixed a blob of sealing wax the size of a frying pan to my documents, he suddenly exclaimed, ‘People must be mad to go sailing like that in these small boats.’ I smiled and agreed with him, adding that there were people ashore just as mad, if not more so.

My fire-arms were returned to me, covered in rust.

February 3rd. Towards the end of this Sunday morning, the Club jetty was thronged. *Kurun*’s departure had never yet been watched by such a crowd. I shook hands with a great many people, set the mainsail and hoisted my colours to the peak.

I was faced with a head wind, but had declined the offer of a tow. I always insist on getting under way under my own power. At the last moment, the secretary of the Club came and presented me with a Club burgee as a souvenir. The helm lashed, I set the jib sheeted aback. Then I cast off.

Slowly I gathered way. People cheered and waved. But I was

A GLOOMY START

fully occupied in handling the boat. In a moment, I would have to go about. The wind—very light—was blowing right down the axis of the narrow channel leading to the yacht Club.

A number of small boats belonging to Club members accompanied me. They were faster and lighter than *Kurun* and could sail to windward better. I was in for some laborious tacking.

At 1.15 p.m., I rounded the pier which sheltered the channel to the Yacht Club. *Grey Gosling*, which had set out with me, overtook me, the wind being too light for *Kurun*; but the moment it freshened, *Kurun* quickly took the lead. *Grey Gosling*'s owner was an Englishman of seventy-one from Beachy Head who went in for singlehanded sailing and was very bitter about not being allowed to go offshore. Apparently his yacht lacked the regulation thirty-five feet.

As I arrived at the line of the harbour channel, *Grey Gosling* turned back.

Imperceptibly, *Kurun* proceeded along the channel toward the open sea. The sky was overcast. From the pierhead, a few friends and some strangers too gave me a last farewell shout. Gerry Trobridge, who was preparing to sail round the world in his ketch *White Seal*, wished us 'good luck' in a voice that boomed across the harbour.

2.35 p.m. I passed the northern pier. There was a fair breeze now and *Kurun* was getting up a steady speed, scattering clouds of spray. A drizzle induced me to put on my oilskins.

Thick weather; visibility practically nil. Not far away, a ship's siren was setting up a dismal howl. After two months ashore, this was a dreary reunion with the sea. It made me feel that my boat was very, very small. I had carefully closed the hatches and portholes and everything on deck was well secured. The prospect was none too gay; far down south, the Cape lay in wait for me. All I could do was to keep a firm hand on the tiller.

The Durban-Cape Town stretch had long haunted me. I kept thinking of various aspects of the voyage, now one, now another. I was by no means looking forward to it. And now, after setting out I felt relief come with activity. My boat was in good order, ready for any eventuality. My senses were alert; I was prepared to see, judge, decide and act. I knew that *Kurun* would soon be in the Atlantic, whatever weather she might run into.

FROM RÉUNION TO DURBAN AND THE CAPE

A thorough study of nautical documents and meteorological and oceanographic conditions shows that the route from Durban to Cape Town is far from a peaceful one, and that for a sailing vessel it is always hazardous. To begin with, bad weather reigns along this coast in all seasons, even during the southern summer. The changes of weather and the gales are sudden and violent. A captain of a small ship who regularly made this trip told me that in two years he had experienced only one fine crossing.

One essential factor in the navigation in that region is the current off Cape Agulhas. It is one of the strongest on earth, reaching at times as much as four to five knots. It follows the coast and if a gale blows in the direction opposite to that of the current, the sea becomes wild and dangerous. At the same time, the additional factor that the current becomes stronger the further it is from the coast and reaches its maximum at the edge of the continental submarine shelf must not be overlooked. Close inshore, there is no current, or, if there is, it is likely to be a back drift, and as a result the sea is much less rough over the continental shelf, which—non-existent off Durban—gradually widens to the south until, south of the African mainland, it becomes Agulhas Bank.

A large ship with powerful engines can manoeuvre there easily enough in bad weather, but a sailing vessel is faced with an altogether different problem. Admittedly, most gales blow parallel with the coast, which, according to some people, means that a sailing vessel can lie-to in all security over the continental shelf; but any captain worth his salt will avoid getting too near the land because of the possibility that a sudden gale from the south-east might cast him ashore. And, in any case, conditions alter beyond Port Elizabeth, going west, for there the continental shelf assumes much greater dimensions and the configuration of the coastline changes.

A sailing vessel, moreover, has to consider the contingency of prolonged calms and consequent immobility. Speed in this crossing is vital to safety. The quicker the crossing, the less chance there is of running into bad weather.

January and February are considered to be the best months for passing from the Indian Ocean to the Atlantic by way of the Cape. During the southern summer, gales are less frequent, shorter and not so violent.

TOO NEAR THE BREAKERS

The week before I set out, I had seen some bad weather to the south. I expected, therefore, to have more favourable conditions at the beginning, for, in general, the wind blows alternately from south-west and north-east, with periods of calm in between. Also, I would be setting out in the phase of the moon during which she shines most of the night, which was a pleasanter prospect than inky blackness. There is nothing more lugubrious than a gale in the pitch darkness of a moonless night.

I had therefore chosen the most favourable circumstances possible, even if beyond Port Elizabeth February had a certain percentage of calms.

2.28 p.m. I had rounded the southern pier of the Durban channel; the wind dropped and the weather grew less murky. *Kurun* was near the coast on which breakers were crashing; I had apparently made a serious error in not getting further out on the other tack on leaving the harbour. The risk of our being dashed on the shore was fairly serious. I got out the oar and tried to scull *Kurun* further out; the swell being very strong, I twice nearly broke the oar.

Attached to my anchor, I had a small three-eights-inch chain given me at Réunion; it was suitable for use in calm water but here I should be certain to lose it, so I prepared to replace the chain by a stout cable. As I was doing so, there suddenly appeared from the south a small launch, out on a fishing trip. There was obviously a good sailor on board, for she came straight up to me; her master had realized my plight and offered me a welcome tow. Ten minutes later, the wind rose and I could ask *Pax* to cast me off.

This time, I got further away from the coast close-hauled on the starboard tack.

The lighthouse of the Bluff remained in sight all night; light winds from every quarter, alternating with calm: exhausting sailing conditions that were to last for most of the crossing. Yet I had a good crossing, though I didn't get enough sleep—only an hour or two here and there—and I was worried, not only on account of the weather but also on account of the intensive traffic.

The weather was fine, in general—occasional squalls and some rain; a lot of calm and plenty of head winds. There were days, however, with very favourable wind that enabled me to make good headway.

FROM RÉUNION TO DURBAN AND THE CAPE

On February 5th, I passed the frontier separating the provinces of Natal and Cape of Good Hope, marked by Umtamvuna River. In the morning, I passed the cross-valley of the Gates of Port St. John, an abrupt cleft in a huge plateau of stratified sandstone, some twelve hundred feet deep, which looked very striking in the sunlight. After lunch, I saw my first albatross since leaving Durban.

At 8.25 p.m., the first glow of the lighthouse on Point Hood (East London) became visible; at 2.30, the next morning, I caught my first glimpse of Great Fish. In the evening of the same day, I was within a few miles of Cape Recife which provides Port Elizabeth with shelter. I lingered a considerable time in this neighbourhood owing to calm.

On February 7th, after lunch, I went below to sleep for a while, *Kurun* running with the tiller lashed, with a light west-north-west wind. When I came on deck again, I was surprised to see a large ship very near me. She must have passed within a very short distance of *Kurun* and was no doubt astonished at seeing an apparently derelict sailing boat.

Late that day, after a period of calm, I made sail again with a light south-south-west wind. The jib sheet fouled and I leapt forward to free it. My bare foot must have caught in a fairlead: I heard a noise that sounded as if a piece of wood had snapped and felt a slight stab of pain. When I had finished dealing with the sail, I found that I had broken my 'starboard little toe', and could not put my foot flat down on the deck. I had to go below and improvise a bandage out of clean rags. It was a small matter but a considerable nuisance, as it caused me to limp and made my foot sensitive to every jolt.

February 8th. 5.40 a.m. Fog. Visibility nil. I constantly blew my foghorn and listened to every sound. I had no wish to be cut in half in that pea-souper.

6.55 p.m. A seal came up to the boat, the first I had seen since leaving the Galapagos.

The swell from the south-south-west became stronger. There was a magnificent sunset, with the last sunbeam green in a cloudless sky. Just before sunset, the wind eased off a little. I could see high peaks on the horizon.

February 9th. Flat calm. Whales nearby. A fine morning. Along the steep edge of Agulhas Bank, the swell was violent and the

IN THE ATLANTIC AGAIN

rollers were breaking. To see rollers turning into breakers in a calm sea is an ominous sign. In a gale from the south-west, the sea here must be stupendous.

Kurun was rolling in the swell, taking it very well. There were several albatrosses; these birds were by no means shy and would sail to within a very few feet of the boat. I threw them some pieces of bread, which a few accepted but the majority disdained.

The following night, the wind freshened in the east. The barometer was falling and the sky had a forbidding look. The cutter, with four rolls in the mainsail, was sailing fast; the sea varied between a violent swell and very rough. Yet the wind had eased up and come ahead.

February 12th. My observations at noon put me at sixty-one and a half miles S. 75° E. of Cape Agulhas—the Needles—but the wind was not in my favour. At 8.30 p.m., the light of Cape Agulhas appeared at approximately 333 magnetic.

February 13th. At 1.38 a.m., I had Cape Agulhas to the true north. I blessed the moment. It is commonly thought that the Cape of Good Hope is the extreme point of the African continent, but in actual fact Cape Agulhas is the southern extremity. Also, the meridian of 20° E. passes through it, the demarcation line between the Indian and the Atlantic Oceans. This was a great moment in my voyage: I was again in the Atlantic, the sea of my native shores.

At 3 a.m., finding I could no longer keep my eyes open, I went below and slept till 5.30 a.m. *Kurun* steered herself on a slightly more southerly course than was necessary, the wind blowing from the south-east. By daybreak, I was back at the helm.

At a quarter past twelve, I sighted land ahead. With enormous white bow-waves, *Kurun* was running hard towards the Cape of Good Hope. Though the distance was considerable, I could begin to admire Walker Bay, the coast and the mountains. Unfortunately, everything was soon blanketed in mist; the wind was freshening, the mountains were capped with cloud—a sure sign that a south-easter was on its way.

Since morning, the wind had freshened steadily and the sea was running high. At 3 p.m., I decided to rig the automatic steering with the staysail boom sheeted close in to manoeuvre more easily. I had to take three rolls in the mainsail.

FROM RÉUNION TO DURBAN AND THE CAPE

At 3.25 p.m., I had to roll down two more turns in the mainsail and replace No. 2 jib by No. 3, as the wind was still freshening.

The sea was becoming rougher, and *Kurun* flew over the combers. A gale, but a manageable sea. Wind velocity 7 to 8. Later I was to hear that ashore the gale had reached a velocity of forty to fifty miles an hour, i.e. velocity 10. I hauled down the staysail, sheeted flat the jib and ran before the wind at an amazing speed.

On nearing the coast, I saw some seals playing in the heavy seas which did not seem to worry them in the slightest. I had to remain alert to keep running before the wind. I had luffed up a little too much in order to be able to see the cape from close to.

The Cape of Good Hope really consists of two capes: Cape Maclear to the west and Cape Point to the east. North of the former rises Vasco da Gama peak. This extremity of the peninsula of the Cape has a savage splendour. There is only one discordant note: the buildings in the vicinity of the lighthouse—they should have been made to harmonize with the landscape.

The wind kept blowing hard. By 7.15 p.m., I was to the west of Cape Point, and found myself exactly midway between two passenger steamers, the *City of Pretoria*, painted in light colours, heading north, and a Union-Castle Liner, painted lavender, heading south. Though both ships passed quite close to me, I could see no one on board. Not a trace of life, whereas I, barefooted and in my oilskins, was keeping careful watch at the helm of my small cutter.

With nightfall, the powerful light of Slang Kop came to keep me company. Ashore, vast raging fires lit up the sky between Olifants Bosch Point and Slang Kop Point.

Kurun was maintaining a great speed. If this lasted, I could expect to make Cape Town harbour shortly after midnight. I did not feel I could steer for the harbour without first making sure of details and I decided to go below and study the charts yet again and choose my anchorage. I was feeling cold in any case.

9.15 p.m. I hove-to on the starboard tack heading towards the shore, for I found that I had gone a little too far out. I then realized that there was a little more wind than I had thought, but *Kurun* lay-to marvellously.

I was glad to be out of the wind, to have some food and a hot drink. To be in one's cabin with the wind howling and whining in the rigging gives one a pleasant feeling of comfort.

GALLOPING HOME

Having studied the harbour chart, I came to the conclusion that it would be child's play to enter the harbour at night, no matter what tricks the wind played.

I opened a bottle of old rum that had been given me at Réunion. I felt the crew deserved to splice the mainbrace after rounding the Cape. And before going on deck, I lit a cigar.

'Let her have her head,' I thought, dressing myself warmly for the final preparations. As I checked away the mainsheet to get on my course, the wind blew my glowing cigar to shreds. It was 11.15 p.m.

After her two hours' rest, *Kurun* was racing along, feathers flying. The wind was strong and the sea rough. I had to keep the wind on the quarter. She was giving me her maximum, literally bounding over the waves. Making headway in this fashion was a delight, for the conditions brought out the boat's qualities to perfection. Yet the sea was running very high, and at times I had to bring her stern to the sea to avoid being swamped by a roller. Though occasionally we shipped a sea, *Kurun* was tearing along like a horse smelling its stable.

Soon I came within the range of the lighthouse of Robben Island and I sailed towards it, keeping it N. 47 E. magnetic and watching the bearings of Slang Kop to give the dangers of Duyker Point a wide berth.

February 14th. Violent gusts, strong enough to dismast her, pummelled the boat. Fortunately, there was not one weak spot in the rigging. The wind was cold and chilled me through.

The sea was getting easier and I thought I should be able to reach anchorage before daylight. But suddenly the wind dropped, and I was in a flat calm. It was 1.45 a.m. Lacking the steady pressure of the wind, *Kurun* began to roll, and her rigging chafed. Warm land breezes played round us, but never for long.

Becalmed off Table Mountain, about five miles from the coast; there was nothing I could do but wait.

The sunrise was glorious. Gradually the mountain and the coastline resumed their colours. *Kurun* was as quiet and immobile as the Twelve Apostles carved in stone on the mountain. This stage of the voyage had clearly come to an end. I felt that I was considerably nearer Le Croisic.

The morning air was quite chilly. I noticed a large number of

FROM RÉUNION TO DURBAN AND THE CAPE

jellyfish, a few seals and whales above which birds were circling. I tidied up on board and strolled about the deck. Lighters were passing us. While waiting for the wind to be kind to me, I had lunch. My observations placed me within five miles to the west of Green Point—rather too far to scull.

At 1.50 p.m., I was able to make sail with a feeble breath of wind from the south-west. I had been becalmed for twelve hours, 'one hour per apostle,' as a witty young lady told me in Cape Town. Not too heavy a tribute to pay.

As I was slowly drawing in, a launch came and circled round me. It was the police launch and I accepted the offer of a tow; later the pilot boat took over.

After crossing Duncan Dock, we arrived at the yacht harbour. A few people were waiting at the Club premises, including some journalists with cameras. It was 5 p.m.

Hardly had I moored before a reception was held at the Club to which I was taken as I was—in shorts and with bare feet.

After I had been interviewed and photographed by the press, and the usual formalities had been complied with, a small Club launch took me to a strong mooring buoy. By this time, I had acquired a large and experienced crew, headed by Lieut.-Commander Hegarthy, a consummate yachtsman who was in charge of the naval station. I could, for once, just sit back.

Happy at having arrived, I opened my last bottle of Mumm in celebration. Everything had gone according to plan.

At Cape Town, I could reasonably consider my voyage over. Every main obstacle had been overcome. The thought of this filled me with an intense, almost naïve, delight. The return to Le Croisic from now on would be nothing but a pleasure trip, with perhaps one or two atmospheric disturbances in the northern hemisphere. But what was there to worry me in a summer gale in deep, open waters? I wrote home, 'My next birthday will be celebrated at home.'

The Cape Town yacht basin is altogether isolated from the rest of the harbour. It is without any means of communication with the centre of the town. The Royal Cape Yacht Club is near the naval base, alongside a fine well-sheltered basin, reserved for its sole use. I was delighted at seeing so many yachts there, true sea-going craft, most of them larger than *Kurun*. Their owners were

THE CAPE OF STORMS

skilful yachtsmen, which has a certain significance considering the kind of weather prevailing in those parts. The Cape coast is inhospitable from a yachting point of view. It is a region of real, hard wind. When the early navigators named it the Cape of Storms, they had good reason. But bad though the weather conditions at the Cape may be, they do not hinder the yachts from organizing racing cruises that are hotly contested.

I stayed there about a month—during the fine season—and there were at least half a dozen south-east gales that fully warranted the name. One of them achieved a wind velocity of eighty miles an hour. Along the coast, the wind was so violent that the spindrift lay like a mist on the water. Although I had been assured that the buoy to which I was moored was often used by boats twice the size of *Kurun*, I spent that whole night on watch for fear of accidents.

With a normal south-easter, heavy gusts sweep the yacht basin, covering the decks with sand and making it difficult to go ashore or to return without getting drenched by the spray!

The first of these gales rose during the night, and I nearly lost the pram through it. As it was fastened to the boat with a clove-hitch that was not tautened, I was at fault, and I was lucky to retrieve the pram at the far end of Duncan Dock, covered in fuel oil though it was. The whole harbour was covered by a thick layer of that foul liquid—what a menace these large-engined vessels are!

I saw some very fine boats. I had immediately recognized *Sandefjord* (47 ft. 6 in., the famous ketch designed by Colin Archer). Not a day went by without my having a good look at her. She is admittedly getting on in years, but after a glorious career she was still bravely sailing the seas in all weathers.

The day after my arrival, I had a visit from a Club member, a Frenchman, to my surprise: Georges de Léon. We became great friends. An enthusiastic yachtsman, he was the owner of a Bermudian rigged cutter, *Stella Maris* (44 ft. 8 in.).

Cape Town harbour also sheltered a rather curious vessel, the *Dromedaris*. When I first saw her, she was on the quayside, being finished. She was a reconstruction of the ship in which Van Riebeeck, the founder of the Cape Colony, had arrived three centuries before. The model was reduced by two thirds, which still made it 42 ft. 2 in. The hull was stoutly built and the original scheme of

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rigging had been preserved. But a powerful auxiliary engine had been put inside her. I had the pleasure of seeing her at the opening of the tercentenary celebrations, and she was a worthy spectacle.

My stay at Cape Town made a pleasant break in my long voyage. I may not have spent much time on board attending to various tasks, but I spent all the more availing myself of the kind invitations I received from prominent people and various friends. I was frequently entertained by the French Ambassador to South Africa, M. Gazel, and by the French Consul, M. Castelli, and by their staffs. I was also welcomed by the *Cercle des Amis de la Langue Française*, to whom I gave a talk on my cruise.

I should have liked to have stayed longer and to have accepted the pressing invitations to be present at the Van Riebeeck tercentenary celebrations and to join the Club yachts in the famous Easter cruise to Saldanha Bay. But it would have been unwise to defer my departure.

CHAPTER XVII

CAPE TOWN TO ST. HELENA

March 16th. The day of departure. My stay at Cape Town had exceeded my original estimate. There was an inordinate amount of activity at the Club, this Sunday morning, for within a few days the big races were to be held, and some eighty one-design yachts from all corners of the Union had already gathered in the basin.

At 1.17 p.m., I weighed anchor. Everyone waved farewell. The big bell of the Club-house was rung three times and I replied with three blasts on my foghorn. *Stella Maris*, having an auxiliary engine, was able to take me in tow and soon we reached the entrance to the yacht harbour. On the port beam, we passed the *Dromedaris*, now moored near a warship, the *Transvaal*, an odd contrast. There was a feeble head wind. I set the mainsail and at 1.35 p.m. was able to cast off. Close-hauled on the port tack, we slowly beat out into Table Bay, with *Stella Maris* alongside, for she was accompanying me a short way.

The weather was splendid. Setting out on this new lap did not affect me as previous departures had. I felt more as if I were leaving Le Croisic on a fine day to go mackerel fishing offshore. The wind dropped fairly soon and we lay becalmed. I did not fancy drifting toward Whale Rock where the current was sweeping on to the rocks. Just before sunset, I contrived to get away from this danger point, but the coloured illuminated advertisements of Cape Town remained in sight all night.

March 17th. On picking up a lettuce in the galley, I discovered that I had another stowaway, a small frog this time. Poor little thing . . . the sea water would not suit it. The galley was well provided with greenstuff at the moment, but it was not likely to last more than a week, and what then? I couldn't feed it on condensed milk, or porridge, or jam. And I doubted whether the creature could swim ashore. I thought of making a raft and putting it on it with a mug of fresh water and some lettuce leaves; but the

CAPE TOWN TO ST. HELENA

breakers would soon wreck such a contrivance. There was nothing for it but to keep it on board.

Thinking of my former stowaway Joseph, I christened the frog Josephine. She turned out to be as discreet a travelling companion as her predecessor. Unfortunately, I never saw her again after the lettuces ran out. I don't know what happened to her.

At midday, my observations placed me at nine and a half miles from the Cape Town breakwater—and that after a whole day's sailing. At 2.20 p.m., a light southwesterly wind began to help me move; it freshened and shifted to the south. While I was at the helm, I saw a seal within half a cable. It was to be the last one on this stage of my voyage.

The coastline was beginning to recede; all I could see was the top of Table Mountain, very blunt and blurred in the evening mists. It was my last, almost fabulous, vision of the African continent.

That night, I passed Dassen Island with its lighthouse. I regretted not being able to pause here, for I should have liked to have seen its penguin colony; the birds are said to be extremely tame and not averse to being watched.

Kurun was leaving a fine silvery wake, and the log, which I had provided with new ball bearings, was spinning to perfection, registering five knots and a half. I was already seeing myself as well on the way to St. Helena, but my hopes had risen too soon. A few hours later, the wind dropped. I was in for a succession of calms and gentle head winds.

Had I left Cape Town earlier, I should have had better weather conditions. The southern autumn was early this year, with its light breezes and calms before the season of strong north-westers set in.

March 21st. Wind from the north-north-west, velocity 2. Confused sea. We made no progress, for the choppy seas were checking what little way she had. This was annoying. How was I to get out of this corner and gain the trade winds? As soon as I reached 30° N. I was to meet more favourable conditions. As for the Pilot Chart, again it did not seem to agree with the facts as I found them. It gave only four per cent calm, no winds for north-west to east by north, and only four per cent of north-west wind.

March 23rd. Beccalmed at 6.27 a.m. After a week at sea, I had put about a hundred and ninety miles between myself and Cape Town.

ALBATROSSES

That was a slow-speed record, and there was nothing I could do to amend it. All the same, the barometer was imperceptibly rising and I felt sure the trade wind would succeed the calm.

In the afternoon, a light wind from the south, and a heavy swell from the south-west.

March 24th. For the first time since I left the Cape, I did not have to mark a place on my track chart that nearly coincided with the one I had marked the day before. I had covered well over a hundred miles since the previous day, which was a fine performance, considering that the wind was only moderate. Was *Kurun* going to climb north at long last?

The weather was fine, and I stayed on deck after lunch for the sheer pleasure of it. In spite of the distance, I could see a ship in my glasses abaft the port beam. Her crow's nest and the gun on the fo'c'sle identified her as a whaler. Perhaps she was on her way home to Norway, for the Atlantic season was over.

Some albatrosses were gliding round my boat and I watched them with interest, for, in a few days' time, I should have seen my last of them. They are truly magnificent birds and very much at home far out to sea. Powerful and majestic, they are adapted to withstand the southern gales. In the morning, I had watched them rising heavily from the water like overloaded flying boats, but they had the advantage over the flying boat in the use they made of their large feet. Wishing to see one at close quarters, I fired at a fine specimen with my .22 pistol—a thing I had never done before. I am sure that I hit it but the enormous bird flew unperturbed on its way.

By the afternoon, I had reached the latitude of Durban, so that I had completed my circumnavigation of South Africa.

At long last, Aeolus was beginning to be indulgent. For three days on end, I had an excellent southerly wind. *Kurun* ran like a dog with a bone in its mouth, but our progress was not very comfortable, as there was a heavy cross swell, enough to throw me out of my bunk, and from time to time we shipped a sea.

As I got further north, the wind backed south-east.

March 27th. After lunch, I saw my last albatross and at the very same moment found the first flying fish on deck, which must have fallen there during the night. My noon observations gave me $26^{\circ} 35' S.$ $8^{\circ} 16' E.$

CAPE TOWN TO ST. HELENA

During the afternoon, I set the twin staysails and ran before the wind. I was hoping to continue like this as far as the doldrums, as far as the Equator. Unfortunately, the wind soon dropped, and my speed decreased considerably.

March 29th. I had a nasty shock on going to wind the chronometer at the usual time; the winder had jammed. It would be a nuisance to have to do without G.M.T., even though I had a radio. I decided to open up the case. The small part that blocks the spring was out of place. Luckily, I had a watchmaker's screwdriver on board and I managed to get the piece back into position, but found that the screw holding it in place was damaged, which made it impossible to tighten it. For the future, I should be able to wind the chronometer only with the utmost care, opening the case each time.

For several days, the blue of the sea had been deepening. All this afternoon, I did odd jobs on deck and climbed to the topmast once or twice, which is quite a sport when the boat is rolling; she rolled so sharply that I was nearly catapulted overboard.

March 30th. I celebrated crossing the Tropic of Capricorn by opening a bottle of Frontignac and one of the last tins of salted almonds I had had on board since I was at the Canaries, nearly two years ago.

April 1st. I was not proceeding north fast enough. My meridian altitude was less than on the previous day. The sun's declination had therefore exceeded Kurun's gain in latitude.

At 3.30 p.m., I saw my second flying fish. *Poisson d'avril?*—Anyway, I ate the April fool.

A fine evening, such as I had not seen for some time. The night was magnificently clear. The moon was shining and the stars were brilliant. I had a long look at the Southern Cross which was already pretty low, though still well above the horizon.

Before turning in, I sat for a while by the windlass to enjoy the beauty of the night and listen to the gentle murmur of the bow wave. Placidly the oaken stem was ploughing the ocean and so pertinaciously that I was certain of being home soon, which would not be a bad thing, for I had noticed a few patches of green along by the bobstay and a few small tufts below the waterline.

April 3rd. The finest weather imaginable. Glorious sunshine, an extraordinarily blue sea. The trade wind of my dreams. Hardly

MY LAST LOG SWALLOWED

an untoward movement in the boat. Crossing the ocean like this was a rest cure in itself. But then, I was in the region of trades where bad weather is unknown.

At dawn, I had crossed the Greenwich meridian—the beginning of the end of my circumnavigation of the globe. The binnacle watch was once again showing Greenwich mean time after having shown every other kind of time.

Although I had been on the great arc from Cape Town to New York for some days, I had not sighted a single vessel.

April 4th. The 'small Tahitian' was chafing badly against the aftermost shroud, especially in the light winds, and though I had well served the latter, I decided to set the sail forward of the shrouds, which was feasible enough as the boat was sailing before the wind. Having done this, I found that the sail was filling much better, and I rigged the big bamboo pole I had got at Taahuku. Unfortunately, the halyard would not take it properly and parted, which meant that I had to climb the mast carrying all my tools, not forgetting the spanner and rags for the servings. It was a tricky but highly satisfying job.

April 6th. My noon observations placed me about eighty miles from St. Helena, so, after lunch, I worked on deck to get the sails back to normal for manoeuvring.

I noticed that my log line was cut. And the shark too, I hoped. That meant that I had lost my last rotator, which was bad luck—the log had been working so well with its new ball bearings. With the whole of South Africa at my disposal, I had been unable to procure new rotators. I was therefore unable to gauge my exact speed, especially when I was not on deck. On deck, I was sufficiently familiar with the boat to be able to guess her speed pretty accurately in all sailing conditions.

5.22 p.m. A small white seagull appeared near the boat—a sign of land.

6.50 p.m. Some porpoises—the first I had seen since leaving Cape Town—swimming very fast, performed some spectacular leaps on the starboard bow. Hoping to be within sight of land by the next dawn, I set my alarm clock and lay down for a few hours.

April 7th. No stars to allow me to make observations at dawn, but there would have been little point in doing so, anyhow, as I knew exactly where I was.

CAPE TOWN TO ST. HELENA

Gradually the night shed its gloom.

6 a.m. Sky overcast; rain; squalls. Dirty weather for making a landfall.

6.17 a.m. 'Land!' I exclaimed. A faint outline, more to be guessed at than seen, but unmistakably St. Helena, the eastern side of the island, of which I at once took bearings. Almost immediately, the land vanished from sight. A few minutes later, I had a brief glimpse of the western coast and again I quickly took bearings. After this, all was greyness. The weather was thick and visibility was approaching nil.

Suddenly the wind freshened. For once the trade wind decided to blow at the end of a lap. With reduced speed, under a single staysail, I made for the shore, not expecting to have to set the mainsail until I had got under the lee of the island. I had the whole day to reach my moorings.

Flocks of birds circled over shoals of fish. I saw my third flying fish since leaving Cape Town.

8.22 a.m. Sperry Island hove in sight a short distance away. This small island, encircled by rocks, and within half a mile of the main island, was all I could see. Its crumbling, magnificent rocks guard the southern approaches to St. Helena.

10.37 a.m. The west point came in sight, a short distance away. Though the coast was very near, all I could see was the extremity of this enormous rock which rises sheer from the sea. In this thick weather, it all looked very sinister.

Soon the wind dropped almost to nothing. Having set the mainsail, I rounded West Point at 9.55 a.m. at a distance of about three cables.

Under the lee of the island, I was becalmed, but now the sun had broken through the clouds and made the scene look very different. Tortured rocks and lava, steep cliffs that looked eager to crush the unwary. Not a sign of human habitation.

The sea had assumed an extraordinary blue colour. A very graceful small black seagull with a white head, such as I had never seen before, tried to settle on the boat. It was as if it were bringing me greetings from the island. I was to see many more of them at St. Helena.

Ponderously the boat moved forward before occasional breaths of wind, but by now I could distinguish clumps of green and a few

I SWIM ASHORE

houses high up on the hillsides of the valleys that opened straight into the sea.

It became necessary to beat to windward. At 1.15 p.m., I could see the houses of Jamestown. St. Helena looked magnificent in the sunshine.

In lieu of lunch, I ate a bar of chocolate. Then, having made a long tack during which I was able to see the two northern points of the island, I went about at 4.10 p.m., reckoning to make St. James's Bay this time. Later I realized that, from the point of view of speed, I might just as well have sailed right round the island.

From afar, I could see a motor-launch coming toward me. She was the government craft and offered to take me in tow, an offer I declined. We went along side by side for a short while and exchanged information. I was told that there was an excellent mooring buoy I could use. This was good news, for it is always unpleasant for a small boat to have to anchor in deep water.

At 5.50 p.m., the crew of the launch helped me to moor within half a cable of the landing stage in St. James's Bay. I had been twenty days at sea, a long time for seventeen hundred miles. Still, I had arrived, which was the main thing.

As I was furling my mainsail, the French Vice-Consul, M. Peugeot, the only Frenchman on the island, came to see me. He had been notified by cable of my departure from the Cape and had been given a probable date of arrival. As the estimated duration of my trip had been fifteen to seventeen days, M. Peugeot had begun to worry, especially as a liner from the Cape had not seen me on the way. As soon as I had been sighted, therefore, he hastened to meet me.

The next morning, the weather being fine, he called for me in his car to take me round the island. I was just bathing in the clear and calm waters of the bay; the temperature of the water was delightful, and thus it was that I landed at St. Helena by swimming ashore.

St. James's Bay is an open, unsheltered roadstead, but being under the lee of the island, it is protected from the south-east trade wind. The regularity of the prevailing winds does not render the roadstead entirely safe, for heavy storms in the south raise a big swell which creates enormous rollers—as it does also round the neighbouring island of Ascension—making it impossible to go

CAPE TOWN TO ST. HELENA

ashore. On such occasions, vessels have to anchor some way offshore in deep water. Though infrequent, these rollers have been known to wreck ships, and one has to remain on guard against them.

From the sea St. Helena looks like a high block of stone, rising steeply from the water. No hospitable bays, no sandy beaches—nothing. An arid wilderness, and therefore the obvious place to which to deport people. St. James's Bay, where I was, was not particularly welcoming. The towering cliffs were oppressive.

One landed on the rocks, and this was not easy owing to the perpetual undertow. I would go ashore in my pram, availing myself of the swell, jump out on the crest of a wave and quickly pull the pram after me before the next wave came.

I could well imagine Napoleon's arrival in the *Northumberland* on October 16th, 1815. The scenery must have been identical, the same rocks, the same swell, with only human hostility and curiosity added. The great captive had chosen to go ashore at night, but all the inhabitants were awaiting him with lanterns.

Jamestown is the only township on the island and most of the people live there. With its church steeple, it looks like a peaceful country town; there is nothing colonial about it. Its situation is picturesque, for it extends across a valley, the rocky sides of which abound in cacti. A gate, which at one time was kept closed, opens to the bay.

If, seen from the sea, St. Helena looks an impenetrable rock, it gives a very different impression when one leaves the coast and penetrates into the interior. Once the first ridge is passed, the country is surprisingly beautiful.

On climbing Ladder Hill, which rises above the little town, one has to pass through an arid country of rocks and cacti, reminiscent of the Galapagos. But further in, it is as if magic had been at work: the traveller comes suddenly upon a green and wooded countryside with grass, fields, rushes, stalwart trees and pinewoods, by no means a tropical landscape. Moreover, it is a friendly scene with cows and sheep, and the spectator tends to forget that he is in mid-Atlantic.

The population of St. Helena is extremely mixed—its constituents were black slaves, Chinese coolies, Malays and Hindus, with a generous blend of the blood of visiting white navigators

NAPOLEON'S LAST HOME

and soldiers in garrison through the centuries. Skins are of every colour. The people are simple and helpful and there are several good-looking young women; adverse criticism of the mixture of races seems to be confuted here.

During my stay, M. Peugeot constituted himself my wise and pleasant guide and advisor. He lived at Longwood, naturally, and I quickly formed the habit of visiting him there, so that I was soon familiar with that historic setting. Longwood, a French property, stands on an arid and very open plain. The approach is along a straight avenue lined with trees which is closed by a barrier and an adjoining notice-board which reads: 'French Domain. Closed to Public until further notice.'

Having crossed the gardens, the visitor comes to the Emperor's house, a typical country residence, more like that of a retired country notary than of a deposed emperor. It is quiet and the air is pure. One wonders about the years that the great man of action spent there. In the gardens are sunk walks which Napoleon had made to escape the gaze of the curious; he had them dug so deep that not even his cocked hat could be descried.

While *Kurun* was at St. Helena, the Governor sent his aide-de-camp with a message to let me know that he would be happy to receive me. So, one morning, a shining car with white coats of arms on the doors, called for me at the landing stage. On that occasion, I visited Plantation House, a residence full of historic memories. The Governor, Sir George Andrew Joy, received me most cordially, speaking in impeccable French: he had studied at Bruges for some time and had been stationed in the New Hebrides for fourteen years.

In the peaceful park of Plantation House lives a personage who has known both Napoleon and Hudson Lowe, since he was two hundred and forty years old at the time of my visit: Jonathan, a giant tortoise from the Galapagos. In the flower of his youth, Jonathan used to have a mate, but she died—some hundred years ago. Every year, in the spring-time, the season of love, Jonathan becomes restless and embarks on a long and fruitless search.

I liked St. Helena. I liked its history, its scenery and its people. I often climbed the six hundred and ninety-nine steps of the Jacob's Ladder that lead almost perpendicularly to the old fort of Ladder Hill—now a school—and to the realm of the spiny cacti with their

CAPE TOWN TO ST. HELENA

scarlet fruits. I liked chatting with the people and with the many wide-awake children. Boys and girls would often swim out to my cutter and at times deck and rigging were festooned with my young visitors.

The boats of St. Helena are modest—mainly whalers used only for rowing; but the islanders are wonderful oarsmen, and I enjoyed watching them ply their long oars which they did most harmoniously. The entire coast abounds with fish, and fishing, if primitive, is highly productive.

April 19th. For the last time, I lunched at Longwood. M. Peugeot saw me back to the landing stage in his latest model Vauxhall. Children and men, whose faces had grown so familiar to me, waved farewell. I went on board, almost unaware of the fact that *Kurun* was rolling heavily, as she had been rolling all the time she had lain in this open roadstead.

Getting under way was tricky on account of the many craft that were about. Having hoisted the sails, I had to gybe her round.

At 4.10 p.m., I set out. I only just missed the little auxiliary yacht *Yellowfin*. My boom just missed carrying away her elegant spar.

The wind was freshening as I drew further away from the shore, and before long my well-wishers had ceased to be distinguishable.

CHAPTER XVIII

FROM ST. HELENA TO LE CROISIC

EAST-south-easterly wind, velocity 4. Swelling sea. Quantities of black gulls circled round *Kurun* as she sailed over numerous shoals of fish. Squalls over the land, spoiling my last view of it.

At 6 p.m., I took in all sail; at 6.32, I was able to proceed after setting the twin staysails. Night, when it fell, was very dark, but I could see the lights of Jamestown and Ladder Hill shining through the blackness. At 8.30 p.m., however, they were swallowed up in the gloom. St. Helena and its tranquil sweetness had become a memory.

From now on, it was a straight homeward run.

Navigation between St. Helena and Ascension is reported to be delightful and it did indeed prove to be a week of rest. I went on deck only to ascertain that everything was shipshape and to shoot the sun. *Kurun* was running before the wind at a steady pace with a moderate trade wind.

April 25th. The Southern Cross was low upon the horizon; just how low was emphasized by the two beautiful, vertically aligned stars of Centaurus immediately beneath it. Daily, those two stars stressed my northward progress; before long they became invisible after dusk. In the north, the Plough was climbing higher and higher. I drew an imaginary line protracting the distance of the two first stars five times. The Pole Star was there—below the horizon.

Gulls circled round the boat, uttering their shrill cries. I was certain to see land on the following day.

April 26th. The night was bright; I frequently went forward to see whether, by any chance, the dark mass of Ascension had appeared.

6.20 a.m.: an almost imperceptible outline, which took a long time to define itself. The island was a little further to starboard than I had reckoned, so the current must this time have been as indicated on the chart, a cross-current running west. I luffed

FROM ST. HELENA TO LE CROISIS

a little, but missed passing as close to the island as I had intended.

From the helm, I gazed at the landscape. The island seemed arid. I could see some dozens of volcanic cones, tinted red and brown in the sunlight; the highest of them is Green Mountain, green indeed as its name indicates, there being trees at the summit. In contrast with St. Helena, Ascension has fine sandy beaches that lend it an attractive look.

Ascension's importance resides solely in its use as a relay cable station.

Late that morning, I passed within three or four miles of the small township of Georgetown. In Clarence Bay, some large ships lay anchored. Not a sign of human beings ashore.

At noon, it amused me to calculate my meridian latitude, and I obtained a difference of only 0.7 miles with my position through bearings—very satisfactory.

I had had little appetite for the last few days—the heat was overpowering. I lived chiefly on bananas, some of which I had dried to prevent them going bad. The fish were not biting, which was a pity, but fish are not often caught when needed.

Soon after 4 p.m., the island disappeared in a haze.

At 5.10 p.m., I made a bold decision: I set my 'small Tahitian' sail and slightly increased my speed toward the Equator.

The next day, the wind blew spasmodically and gradually squalls and rain followed. I was approaching the doldrums.

28th April. Pilot Charts place the doldrums north of the Equator—it seemed that I had got into them. The Nautical Instructions do not mention them at all; indeed, the matter is without interest for modern navigation.

May 3rd. 8 a.m. Wind S.E. $\frac{1}{2}$ E., velocity 3. Swell, sky overcast. Soon the wind dropped and the rain fell in a downpour. Suddenly the wind leaped to the north-east and the rain seemed to become a waterfall. Then calm. The rigging was chafing.

There was no possible doubt now—I was in the doldrums, and there was nothing I could do except be patient and wait. Calms, squalls and rain. Fitful breezes, obliging me to be at the helm all the time. Most unpleasant form of navigation when on one's own.

During these last few days, *Kurun* had not been keeping on her course. I had originally planned to cross the Line at 24° W. and

IN THE NORTHERN HEMISPHERE AGAIN

to do that I should have had to be at the helm night and day; I preferred to sail with the tiller lashed. Actually, it was better to avoid the square formed by the Line, the 5th parallel north and the meridians 20° and 25° W., the region of the maximum of calms, according to the Pilot Chart.

I was unable to make observations today, but in the early hours of the night, I took a sight of Sirius and α of the Southern Cross. *Kurun* had crossed the Line this morning, less than a fortnight after leaving St. Helena. Not bad going, as I had estimated it would take fully fifteen days.

Having made all my calculations, I opened my last bottle of Frontignac and started on a fruit cake which Mme. Peugeot had made for me. Thus I celebrated crossing the Equator—an event after so long a navigation in the southern hemisphere.

At midnight, I was utterly becalmed; the swell was coming from different directions: the two Atlantics. Sky overcast. The rigging was chafing badly—these cross swells are murderous for it; every part wears and suffers damage.

May 5th. The temperature in the doldrums was very high; the absence of wind and the high degree of humidity made it disagreeable. The cabin had to be kept closed, for the torrential downpours would have swamped the boat; the confined, close, hot, damp air made it stifling, and the slightest exertion made me perspire profusely. The moment the rain ceased, I would open the hatches. Besides constant alterations of course, hoisting and taking in sail, I was therefore continually jumping up and down to open or close the hatch and the port-holes. And apart from all this, it is always irritating to see the rigging suffering to no advantage, for suffer it did in that confused swell that made the boat's movements so jerky as calm alternated with mischievous breezes from any direction. And the canvas had to be kept spread in order not to lose a moment's opportunity.

The doldrums! That's where the *Flying Dutchman* should have been condemned to wander. A gale in the Cape region is nothing compared with the trials of this accursed region.

May 6th. Calm. Sky overcast.

My trailing line was cut: a shark, no doubt. The day before, I had found the strong fish-hook badly twisted. I had not caught a thing.

FROM ST. HELENA TO LE CROISIC

The sea was full of plankton, and, in the calm, I could see a prodigious amount of life on the surface of the water. Countless millions of animalcules were teeming in astounding profusion. I fished some out with my hand and put them in a bowl where they remained alive most of the day. I wished there had been some easy way of preserving them; as it was, I amused myself making drawings of some of them.

The barometer rose a little. Would a tail end of the north-east trade wind push me out of the doldrums? My heart was filled with hope.

Early that afternoon, a school of porpoises came and played round *Kurun*. This time, to vent my bad temper caused by my fishing failures, I got my pistol out and went on deck. Twice I hit a fish, but each time the wounded creature dived. A third I shot stone dead with a bullet in its head. It floated on the surface of the water, but the boat had no steerage way, and by the time I had sculled her round, the dead porpoise had sunk into the depths.

Later, when *Kurun* was moving, I shot another one under the jib boom, hitting it in the head, but it plunged down perpendicularly with amazing speed. I was able to follow it with my eyes for some ten fathoms. I should have used the harpoon.

All the afternoon, porpoises followed the cutter, disporting themselves round her. I had plenty of opportunity to watch them. They looked as if they were enjoying themselves—which made me regret my earlier massacre. Sometimes they would turn over on their backs and float along the surface or they would float vertically, their ‘beaks’ right out of the water. I even saw them floating head downwards and tail out of the water. They would suddenly thrash the water with their tails, perhaps to stun small fish. Then again, lazily swimming along the surface, they would suddenly make the most incongruous noises—extraordinary behaviour. After watching them for a long time, I came to the conclusion that they were rough-toothed dolphins (*steno rostratus*), a long-beaked variety of dolphin; their bodies were elongated, their stomachs pinkish and splashed with dark spots. They were about seven feet long, and are not very common. Though I had not seen a white whale, I had seen pink porpoises.

May 7th. I heard the sound of heavy engines. Before long a large

THE POLE STAR

plane came over. At 6.55 a.m., it crossed my bows, bound north-east. Had it seen me? The boat with her red sails must have been plainly visible in the clear morning light. I could not help thinking that if I had been shipwrecked and drifting in a whaler, it would probably have been exactly the same, for I doubt whether from a mile or so away the pilot of a plane can distinguish between a ship's lifeboat and a yacht like mine.

At 12.20 p.m., the weather was splendid though there was thunder in the air. A large liner passed abaft the port beam and she certainly was moving. There went a ship that would be in Europe well before *Kurun*—as would the aeroplane I had seen earlier.

When I was making my meridian observations, the liner was at much the same latitude as I was. I imagined that in her too someone would be using a sextant, and I would have given quite a lot to know what his calculations were.

To all intents and purposes, I had reached the limit of the doldrums, but this was not to say that I had gained the north-east trade wind properly.

At dawn I had a good look at the Plough, and at the alignment of its two first stars α and β pointing straight down toward the horizon. Just below it must be the Pole Star. I stared hard, but could see nothing. Yet as I continued to gaze, I could see a luminous point which I could locate again after I had looked away from it. Unmistakably the place where the Pole Star ought to be. I had therefore found this helpful little star again (my midday observations had given me $4^{\circ} 00' N.$, $24^{\circ} 58' W.$).

May 10th. I had made it. I had gained the north-east trade wind and had nothing to grumble about, being less than twenty-one days out from St. Helena. With the doldrums astern, I could run on undisturbed until I came to the sub-tropical calm. To get through that and make the Azores was now my aim, and after that I envisaged no more difficulties. I reckoned a good two weeks to make Belle Ile.

That afternoon, the sea was more regular and less head-on than in the morning. We were making better progress. Yet, sailing thus close to the wind, I could not count on making more than four knots. Had it not been for the swell, of course, I could have made considerably more. The boat was heeling, scattering spray which

FROM ST. HELENA TO LE CROISIC

constantly flew over the deck so that I had to keep the port-holes closed to windward. The movements of the boat were jerkier, which made it more difficult to use the sextant. It was a comfort to think that a yacht built on classical lines would have heeled far more and would have been far less comfortable, even though she were faster.

In this long stretch close-hauled, each day resembled the one before. Nothing untoward happened. Typical trade wind weather, wonderful sailing conditions. No worries, no cares. Sleep, rest, prepare meals, make observations, read, tinker and stroll about on deck.

As I got further north, the wind veered steadily to the east, which made it possible for me, when I had reached the latitude of Bathurst, to steer towards the true north of the globe.

For the first few days, there was a considerable haze. Gradually the sky became a magnificent blue and the sea also assumed a wonderful azure colour. The further north I got, the more happily did *Kurun* lie on the sea. I could ease the sheets and increase my speed. The wind remained moderate, velocity 3 to 4; the swell continued and I rarely logged under a hundred and ten miles a day. All the same, there was so much spray that not once did I have to wash down the deck.

The temperature slowly dropped as the currents of water became cooler, in spite of the fact that the sun rose higher above the horizon. All the way, flying fish, satanites and tropic-birds kept me company.

The equatorial current proved very irregular and most frequently it was nil or almost nil. On certain days, the boat crossed 'veins' of a different colour.

My trailing line did not catch me a single fish for hundreds of miles.

May 12th. Early in the night, I saw the Pole Star for the second time. I thought of that poetic navigator who claimed to have seen the Pole Star the evening he crossed the Equator, which was most unlikely, seeing that the Pole Star is only of the third magnitude, and not very bright at that, and that there are generally clouds on the horizon in the equatorial regions. Writing books and telling the truth do not always go hand in hand.

My observations for midday gave me $8^{\circ} 06' N.$ $29^{\circ} 42' W.$

I COMPLETE MY CIRCUMNAVIGATION

Slocum had first seen the Pole Star on his northward voyage in the Atlantic when at $7^{\circ} 13' N.$

May 19th. A fine, bright, starlit night, the sea phosphorescent. The Southern Cross was sinking lower and lower toward the horizon. I watched it with some melancholy, symbolizing as it did the southern seas. But the loss of the Southern Cross would be amply compensated for by the Pole Star, symbol of my return.

May 20th. Early this night I crossed the route I had followed from the Canaries to Martinique at the point at which I was in the early morning hours of May 17th, 1950. I had therefore completed my circumnavigation of the globe in almost exactly two years to the day.

A few hours later, the wind dropped, which indicated that I had entered the area of calms and insignificant winds, and that I had reached the region of sub-tropical calms well before their official latitude. This is the region known to English navigators as the horse latitudes, for in the old days when they ran short of water as the result of prolonged windless spells they had to throw the horses they carried overboard to save drinking water. In contrast to the equatorial calms, these sub-tropical calms are accompanied by dry clear weather.

The sea was fine and I delighted in watching my first Portuguese men-of-war, the *physalia utriculus*; they made their way along the surface like galleons, displaying their blue-violet hues and spreading their transparent lateen-shaped sails to the wind. At the same time, I was highly successful with my dorado fishing, this being the best area for them.

May 21st. For lunch I ate the last of the apples I had brought from St. Helena. I had practically used up all my fresh food; I still had some onions which I often ate raw, a slice at a time, and some potatoes. The doradoes, therefore, were like manna, a constant supply of fresh food.

May 22nd. After having prepared the fine dorado I caught this morning and cooked it in a wine sauce, I hurled myself into the preparation of mayonnaise. Twice running I failed, but, with sudden inspiration, I mixed the two failures, adding vinegar and mustard: it was a great success. I even added a few drops of Tabasco and some of the oil in which I had soaked red pimentoes from the Galapagos. It was strong enough to take the skin off a horse's

FROM ST. HELENA TO LE CROISIC

mouth; it certainly gave me an appetite, for I ate about half the dorado at one sitting.

May 24th. Calm. The weather was deceptive, all the more so as, according to the Pilot Chart, I should not yet have reached the area of calms, and should still be in a regular trade wind with one per cent incidence of calms. That was by no means encouraging, for I had not yet entered on the stretch of more than seven hundred miles where calms are officially supposed to predominate, which meant that I might well be another month tossing on the swell—no pleasant prospect. And it was exceedingly hard on the rigging.

May 25th. I had a very bad headache all this morning, a rare occurrence with me. I took my first medicine since leaving France: an aspirin tablet, and little good it did me. I am no great believer in medicines, in any case, preferring to leave them to the enthusiasm of town dwellers.

May 27th. During the last twenty-four hours, I logged about fourteen miles, and I had reason to be proud of even that. It was hot and oppressive. The sun beat down relentlessly, which was bad for the deck.

That afternoon the doradoes were chasing fish round the boat. Their speed of attack was phenomenal, and their leaps out of the water spectacular. I watched them hurling themselves upon the Portuguese men-of-war, and the water was swirling in eddies round *Kurun* from their activity. I saw some bitter fights, too. Beneath the jellyfish were often small shoals of pilot fish, about half the size of a sardine, and yet I never saw a dorado go for one of those in the vicinity of the boat, where they swam practically touching the hull, especially near the stern.

The doradoes followed me faithfully and I caught quite a few. I had to stop fishing, in the end, for otherwise I should have filled the boat. There were days when the deck was covered in blood and scales, for it was not always easy to kill these large vigorous fish. Even after I had stabbed their heads time and time again, they continued to thrash.

I dried the fish on deck in the hot sun, which preserved them for several months. I have always been astonished while reading stories of sailors on long cruises like mine to find that they would throw part of their catch overboard. In my view, a long cruise is

I MEET A FRENCH SHIP

based on economy and foresight, and I see no reason why every opportunity to add to one's store of dried and salted fish—excellent food—should not be seized.

I had some bathes, but never swam away from the boat. It would have been ridiculous to be eaten by a marauding shark and have *Kurun* drift away on her own. I have been told that sharks are not dangerous. Personally, I prefer to treat them with great but distant respect.

June 1st. Towards 1 p.m., a west-north-westerly breeze freshened to velocity 4. A miracle! *Kurun* began to move and I began to speculate on the duration of my voyage, for I was not so very many miles away from the northern limit of the wretched sub-tropical belt. Forty-eight hours at a decent speed should see me through.

As on every day, late in the afternoon, I got ready to listen to the B.B.C. time signals—8 p.m. G.M.T. which was 6 p.m. on board. Glancing out of the port-hole above the chart table, I suddenly observed a ship abaft the port beam, not very far away. This vision made me feverish with excitement. Before tuning in my radio, I rushed to the cabin hatch to have a better view: a large tanker, on a course that bisected mine across the bows. I quickly got my time signal and with trembling hand wrote down the comparison with my chronometer time. After I had done that, I went on deck. The large, deeply laden ship was drawing nearer. Those on board her were far from blind, for they changed course toward me. This was a new experience for me.

Soon I was able to read her name through my glasses: the *Champagne*, a French ship.

After forty-three days at sea, it was a tremendous delight to encounter sailors from home. I thought at once of the chance this gave me to have my position communicated to Paris. Before long, the *Champagne* was very close astern. Everyone was on deck. Greetings were exchanged.

'We shall signal your position,' announced a voice, no doubt the captain's. 'Are you in need of anything?'

I thanked him and replied that I had everything I needed.

Slowly the big ship drew away. 'In three weeks' time, I shall be at Le Croisic,' I declared.

The French tricolour rose over the stern of the *Champagne*.

FROM ST. HELENA TO LE CROISIC

Unfortunately, I was unable to return the salute. 'I'm sorry,' I shouted, 'my gaff isn't rigged.' I had no way of knowing whether they heard me.

As the tanker moved away, I sat down over the hatchway to watch the rosy night slowly swallow her. There is a profoundly moving quality in these encounters at sea, at any rate for those who have been sailing a long time.

Captain Durand of the *Champagne* did more than just signal my position to Paris. As soon as he reached France, he called on my parents to tell them about me, the truly friendly action of a fellow seaman.

The wind freshened. The sun was specked with shreds of cloud and before long was entirely veiled. The calm was definitely over. The night was splendid; the Southern Cross was no longer visible, and, in the north, the Pole Star was climbing ever higher above the horizon. The temperature was cooler.

On my bunk, I lay listening with joy to the sounds that indicated that *Kurun* was going faster; the noisy passage of the water along the sides of the hull. I fell asleep to that lullaby which was promising me a speedy return.

Midnight: the sky was overcast, the wind blowing in gusts, velocity 5. *Kurun* was making fine progress toward the north.

Two days later, the wind had freshened into squalls with rain. Under little canvas, I bore away several points, for were I to have stayed on my course, the seas would have been too rough for comfort. The wind next shifted to a north-north-easterly head wind, to freshen to velocity 6 to 7. The sea was growing confused and choppy. *Kurun* shipped sea after sea, and I made her shoulder the waves in order to lose as little ground as possible.

Those north-easterly winds which I had feared to encounter beyond the Azores delayed me far beyond my expectations. Head winds and calms remained with me for most of the crossing.

On June 8th, a small Spanish vessel, the *Cobetas*, passed within two cables of the becalmed *Kurun*. She was an old tub, in ballast, and I am sure, if the wind had been favourable, *Kurun* would have quickly outdistanced that heap of old iron.

After that day, I sighted a number of ships, but all a long way off. On the 11th, after I had taken advantage of a light but

A WATERLOGGED WRECK

favourable south-south-west wind, I saw the Azores before sunset, very hazy and distant: Pico.

Sailing singlehanded, one runs into some curious incidents. That day I had stayed below almost the whole afternoon. Going on deck to look out for land, I arrived in the nick of time to see a wreck straight ahead. Just in time to avoid it by bearing hard away. The wreck was lying waterlogged and was some thirty feet long, covered in shell-fish. I could not make out what she was, but she might well have caused me serious damage.

The next day, at dawn, the land was still in sight, but did not remain so for long. I had rejected the idea of calling at the Azores, for I was feeling the urge to get home. It would have been an advantage to obtain fresh victuals—I had, a few days before, eaten the last coco-nut I had brought from Cocos Keeling, still in excellent condition. I decided to put off visiting the Azores until some future occasion. They were near enough to France!

I had decided, though, to make use of Fayal Channel between Fayal Island and Pico Island, so that I could at any rate have a look at them. But the weather was against my project: it was close and visibility was reduced almost to nil. I rounded Fayal Island by the west instead. I had only the vaguest glimpse of the island, between two squalls.

The following night, I passed within three miles of Graciosa Island. The drizzle accompanied me and I cannot say that my passage through the Azores has left me with pleasant memories.

On the 14th, and the 15th, *Kurun* lay hove-to with six rolls in the mainsail in a north-north-westerly wind that veered to the north-north-east with velocity varying between 7 and gale force. The sea was rough.

On the 14th, at 5.10 p.m., there was an unexpected and ridiculous accident to the rigging. I was sheeting in the small staysail when a sudden wave hurled me against the shrouds, causing the turn-buckles to part. By rights, I should have shot overboard, but thank heaven, the shrouds did not part, and I was left to improvise some repairs.

Hove-to, I spent the following night asleep; on the 16th, at 5.25 a.m., I was able to proceed, all sails set. Late that afternoon, I twice saw a large dorsal fin; in spite of the distance, I was certain it belonged to a grampus.

FROM ST. HELENA TO LE CROISIC

June 19th. The sea was becoming greener and greener. I had finished with the intense blue of the tropical seas. The thermometer had fallen considerably and the sun seemed to have hardly any warmth. The weather was fine—so was the calm, which was to last until the next day. The water was like a mirror, but a mirror undulating with cross swells.

Early in the morning, I noticed a floating body at a few cables away from the boat. Puzzled, I tried to identify it through my glasses. Much later, I saw it nearer the boat and realized with delight that it was a turtle. At last I was going to have a chance I had never had before—to catch a turtle.

I sculled *Kurun* towards it, hard going in the swell. I was already thinking of the turtle as mine: a nice lot of fresh meat and a fine shell. There it was, just about to pass under the jib boom. I left the oar and gently, noiselessly, crept to the bows, pistol in hand. It was a small turtle, but a beauty, with a very handsome shell. From a distance of ten feet, I fired. In spite of the swell, it was hardly possible to miss and I hit it in the neck. The turtle remained motionless; I went and got the boat-hook and was just leaning over to draw it on board, when, to my great surprise, it woke up and lazily dived out of reach.

I was so taken aback that I never thought of firing a second shot. The sea was crystal clear and I could follow every movement of the creature. At one moment, it wavered, and I thought it was coming up to the surface again, but it didn't. Slowly, purposefully, it swam down to a certain depth and stayed there. Goodbye, tortoise-shell! And lunch!

To make up for my disappointment, I prepared myself a dish of rice with Madagascar pimentoes, strong enough to make a pirate swear.

I had been out at sea two months since leaving St. Helena.

June 20th. After two whole days of total calm, I went on again. This was the first time that I had lain becalmed so long; not even in the doldrums had I been two days without moving. This afternoon I saw a large number of Portuguese men-o'-war, the first I had seen north of the Azores.

The sea was rich in plankton, and I could see minute fish and countless transparent bodies that looked like diminutive sea-snakes, some as much as a foot long. Late in the afternoon, a fine

I PAY A CALL ON A WEATHER SHIP

shark swam past, right along the surface, so near it could have grazed the stem. It was escorted by two fine pilot fish, the largest I had seen. I threw some pieces of red cloth to the shark, but it spurned them. As soon as I went to fetch my pistol, it vanished.

June 22nd. I woke up at 2.10 a.m. *Kurun* was running two points south off her course. I tried to get up to rectify this and found I could not move for stabbing pains in the small of my back. Lumbago? A chill? A strain?

To be alone on board, in the open sea, and unable to move, struck me as a very ridiculous situation to be in. I *must* get up, I thought. After ten minutes of sustained effort, I managed to pull myself up by the wrists. I crawled on deck on hands and knees and succeeded in hauling in the main sheet. Then I put out three extra shock absorbers on the tiller. The movement had done me good, which was lucky as I had to go back on deck several times to rectify the sheet and the tiller. In the afternoon, every trace of pain had vanished and I was climbing the mast like a topman.

As on the previous day: drizzle, visibility nil. In spite of unfavourable winds, I kept my eyes skinned lest, gaining north, I allowed myself to go too far east toward the coast of Spain, where *Kurun* would almost certainly have met head winds.

Head winds and calms had retarded me considerably and though at first my progress had been exceptionally good, this stage as a whole lasted much longer than I had bargained for. I was impatient to get news of my whereabouts to my parents, so I decided to make contact with the French weather frigate at point K on my route. I knew her position from my nautical documents: 45° N. and 16° W. It would be child's play to find her.

On June 25th, at 10.35 p.m., I saw lights. Close-hauled, *Kurun* was not doing too well; the wind was light and the sea confused. Hence it was not before 1.10 a.m. that I hailed *Le Brix*—though I did not know her name at the time. I had to tack repeatedly to approach the frigate which was drifting across the sea.

'French yacht, *Kurun*, sixty-eight days out from St. Helena. Please signal position to Mutucha, Paris.'

To my amazement, they knew all about me, and everyone turned out to have a look. I was sorry to have chosen so inconvenient a time to call on them, but they all sounded so friendly

FROM ST. HELENA TO LE CROISIC

that I decided to linger a while. 'I'll call you again in daylight,' I said.

I hove-to. With daylight, I set sail again to catch up with the frigate which had drifted faster than my cutter. I circled several times round the weather ship, weighing the dangers of coming alongside in the swell; presently, to my delight, I saw they were launching a dinghy to fetch me. On the deck of the frigate, I felt very strange. The roll was so different from what it was in my small boat with which I had become as one.

My reception was more than cordial—understandably so as nearly all the crew were Bretons. It was an inexpressible pleasure to set foot on this outpost of France. There I was, in the mess, lunching with Captain Le Roux and his staff. And after lunch I had the gratification of seeing their great meteorological charts of the North Atlantic, which were extremely instructive to me.

And there, right out at sea, I had a warm shower, and the ship's barber gave me a haircut that made me presentable again.

In the afternoon, some of the ship's officers came to visit me in my boat. *Kurun*, lying across the sea, was rolling gunwale under, and to my considerable astonishment, for it was a possibility I had not foreseen, nearly all my visitors became sea-sick. I was thoroughly ashamed at this return of their kind hospitality—it certainly cut their visit short.

The next day, the *Le Brix* and *Kurun* parted company—I with a good load of fresh victuals, which was a pleasant luxury, for I still had water and victuals, though not fresh, enough for several months. Another thing I carried away was a bagful of mail. Having set sail, I gave the frigate a treble salute and on a light north-north-west wind turned my stem towards Le Croisic.

At 5.40 p.m., I sighted two tunny-fishers to starboard—the first boats from my own Brittany. They were going in the opposite direction, and I altered my course to pass close to the nearer one. She was a sturdy motor vessel used for both tunny-fishing and trawling. On her side, I could read the word Concarneau. The men were fishing, and though the tunny were not biting, they hardly raised their eyes from the hooks. I heard one shout, 'There's the lad from Le Croisic who's sailing round the world!' It seemed that I was no longer a stranger to the Breton fisherman. I was to

THE LAST SPRINT

meet several more tunny-fishers, fine sailing boats with multi-coloured sails. I never tired of admiring them.

It had now become necessary to keep a watch at night. It would have been too silly to be run down so near the end of the voyage. I managed to snatch a few hours' sleep during the daytime.

A few hours after I had parted from the *Le Brix*, the wind had dropped, but after a day's sailing in a light sea wind, I ran into some land winds. On July 2nd, I felt a little hard done by, as I had hoped to spend my birthday ashore. I had to lie-to with four rolls in the mainsail, for the sea was too rough and the wind too strong for proceeding normally. Until the 4th, I breasted the seas in squalls and rain. During the night of the 3rd, I cut across the route from Ushant to Finisterre and sighted a number of vessels, and I had to be watchful as the wind persisted in blowing out my navigation lights. The sea was rough, and the waves so high that nearby ships were at times hidden from me.

On the 5th, it was calm again, but Aeolus could not keep up his playfulness for ever: on Sunday, July 6th, a favourable wind rose in the south-south-west and remained with me until the finish.

Squalls, rain and even thunderstorms. *Kurun* needed something like this to herald her approach.

I was just shooting the sun when the tunny-fisher, the *Coeur Vaillant* of Concarneau, came to speak to me. Immediately to the south of me, she made it impossible for me to use the sextant, and I asked her to clear the horizon. When I had worked out my position, I gave it to her, with the request to pass it on to Radio St. Nazaire so that my parents would know.

Squalls and rain, but a good wind to carry me forward. With four rolls in the mainsail, *Kurun* was again showing her paces. All night I stayed at the helm, but I was utterly happy; in the morning hours I expected to see Belle Ile.

At 3 a.m., the sky cleared and for the last time I calculated my latitude by the Pole Star, just for the fun of it. After dawn, I sighted several large vessels.

The sea had changed colour; there were seagulls and a gannet. Land was not far off. I could sense it, I could smell it.

8 a.m. I went below to enter my observations, and when I returned on deck—there was the land. I shall restrict myself to these details: wind south-south-west, velocity 5. A strong swell.

FROM ST. HELENA TO LE CROISIC

Thunder in the air. Barometer 30.31 in., temperature 63.5°. Land in sight to port.

It was Belle Ile! With beating heart, I suddenly began to wonder: What if it were Groix? Surely I could not have made so gross an error? No, of course not—it was the huge lighthouse of Goulphar, the one that had shone as the last light of France when I set out.

The coast grew bright in the sunlight, the wind blew less hard. I began to contemplate the delight of entering Le Croisic harbour. As I was shaving, an aeroplane came circling round *Kurun*, flying very low. It seemed to be taking an inordinate interest in me, so I hoisted my colours. I was not aware then that the foreign press had been following my voyage and that the French journalists were now lying in wait for me at Le Croisic. Three quarters of an hour later, another plane came circling round. No possible doubt of its motive.

Beyond Kerdonis, the southern point of Belle Ile, I met some fishermen, hauling in their lobster pots. I sailed close to them on purpose. One of them shouted, 'I saw your mother the other day at Houat. She's fine.' Houat is a small island off Belle Ile, where my mother often stayed. This was a delightful way of getting news.

I passed one place of pleasant memories after another: Houat, Hoedik, Les Cardinaux. At 12.15, the lighthouse of Le Four was in sight, at 12.35 the peninsula of Le Croisic.

This time, there was no need to study charts to make my landfall. I merely looked up the times of the tides. Would I succeed in making the harbour before the ebb set in?

As I drew near the lighthouse of Le Four, I noticed a launch I knew very well, *La Brière*, a fisheries patrol vessel. Why was she flying all her flags in rainbow fashion? And then I realized that she had come out to welcome *Kurun*. On board were the Maritime Registrar of St. Nazaire, M. Belingard, the editor of the journal *Cols Bleus*, M. Lucas, and other familiar faces. M. Belingard threw me a piece of paper, wrapped round a rifle bullet, bearing the congratulations of the Minister of Merchant Marine, and announcing that I had been awarded the Knight's Cross of the Order of Maritime Merit.

After I had rounded the lighthouse of Le Four, a number of craft appeared, one after the other, and I began to recognize several old friends. One of them, to my extreme joy, was the little

HOME

launch *L'Indomptable*, belonging to my friend Jano Quilgars, with my mother and father on board. She came alongside and I sprang across to embrace them. And alone, with the wind on the quarter, surrounded by a host of friends and strangers, *Kurun* ran merrily on, with no one at the helm or even on board, keeping her set course toward Le Croisic jetty. She knew so well what to do that my presence seemed superfluous.

We soon drew alongside her again, and I took the helm. The long familiar granite jetty was near and I rounded the beacon of Baz Hergo.

Officials and crowds of people were waiting on the quay. For the last time, I took in my sails and accepted a tow from *L'Indomptable*, for it would have taken too long to sail up to the harbour.

At 3.25 p.m. by the boat's chronometer—one hour earlier than local time—*Kurun* entered the channel. Seventy-nine days after leaving St. Helena, my voyage had come to an end. I had brought *Kurun* home, her mast half eaten away, her paintwork in a pitiful state, her red sails faded by the sun, the squalls and the gales, a *Kurun* showing every sign of having covered thousands and thousands of miles—but a *Kurun* victorious and sound at heart.

Yet, great as was my joy at returning to my native land and to my people, in spite of the rejoicings of the moment, I felt, as *Kurun* moored, that I had not come back to harbour to stay. I was merely at a port of call.

APPENDIX A

DESCRIPTION OF *KURUN*

THE question has often been asked: what is the minimum length to ensure safety in a vessel that has to brave any sea anywhere? Even today I should not like to have to give a definite answer to that question. At a guess: thirty feet—and perhaps I would add six or seven feet. The experience of others is useful in coming to a decision. If Slocum had rebuilt his *Spray*, he would have kept the same lines but would probably have enlarged her. And Slocum was the most outstanding sailor of all time. In general, those who have undertaken long voyages, and have prepared for them with other aims than merely striving after originality or catching the eye, have chosen craft of a certain tonnage, provided that they had sufficient means to build their ideal vessel.

My opinion, however, for what it is worth, is that the safety of a ship depends more on her proportions than on her dimensions. A small craft may be as safe as a large one, often more so, if she is better planned, better built, rigged and equipped. In planning a sea-going vessel, the main preoccupation should be threefold: beam, freeboard, and absence of overhang.

The stability of the hull of a sailing vessel is a fundamental factor. That implies beam. To obtain stability merely by weight is to be deprecated, if only because of the fearful rolling this causes. Nevertheless, for a vessel undertaking long sea cruises, a metal keel is indispensable to prevent capsizing. We know that if a hull of considerable size and considerable initial stability but without external ballast comes to a certain angle of heel, the righting couple cancels out and the vessel turns over. *Spray* is a perfect illustration of this point. I have a certain affection for that old boat—and what sailor does not share my fondness?—but one cannot ignore her failings. Specialists have demonstrated the point, and experience has given many a cruel proof of its validity. The Americans, as loyal as they are enthusiastic, have built several sailing vessels on the exact lines of Slocum's famous *Spray*. There have been fatal accidents, and I know personally of one case of the turning over of one of these copies. There are some who maintain that this weakness was the cause of the loss of *Spray*.

On the other hand, a hull such as that of *Firecrest* offers an exactly opposite example, as all her stability resides in her keel. But, although she has many good qualities, she remains an unpleasant vessel, very

DESCRIPTION OF KURUN

tender and often difficult to live in. Not a type to be recommended, in my opinion.

Some people hold that the beam of a boat is an obstacle to speed. This is an error, as it is the length in the water that determines speed. After the beam, the freeboard is the essential consideration. A good buoyancy reserve is a fundamental necessity for a small boat, one of its best safeguards in bad weather. People tend to judge freeboard from the plan or to admire a ship in the calm water of a harbour: at sea, there is little of the freeboard left, as can be realized from a glance at a sailing boat in a fresh breeze.

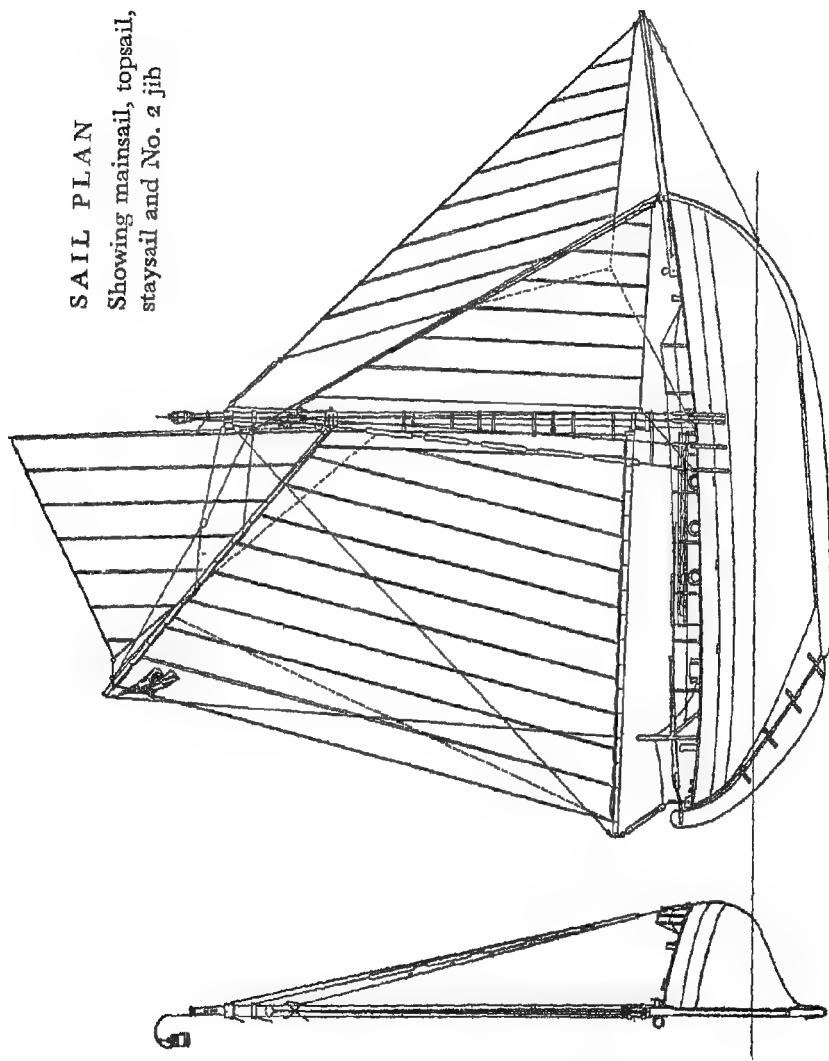
Overhang is to be condemned in a sea-going vessel. When over-developed, it weakens the hull and diminishes its resistance. Many examples can be brought forward to prove this. A number of beautiful ketches from the French Atlantic coast have been lost on account of their arched counters—sources of leaks when hove-to with waves pounding the stern. A quotation from Slocum is apposite here: ‘Smooth-water sailors say, “Where is her overhang?”’ They never crossed the Gulf Stream in a nor’easter, and they do not know what is best in all weathers.’

While on this topic, let us also note that a long rake at the stern necessitates a rudder-trunk and invariably this causes secondary troubles, as Bernicot discovered in his famous *Anahita*. For small craft, nothing can surpass the transom rudder.

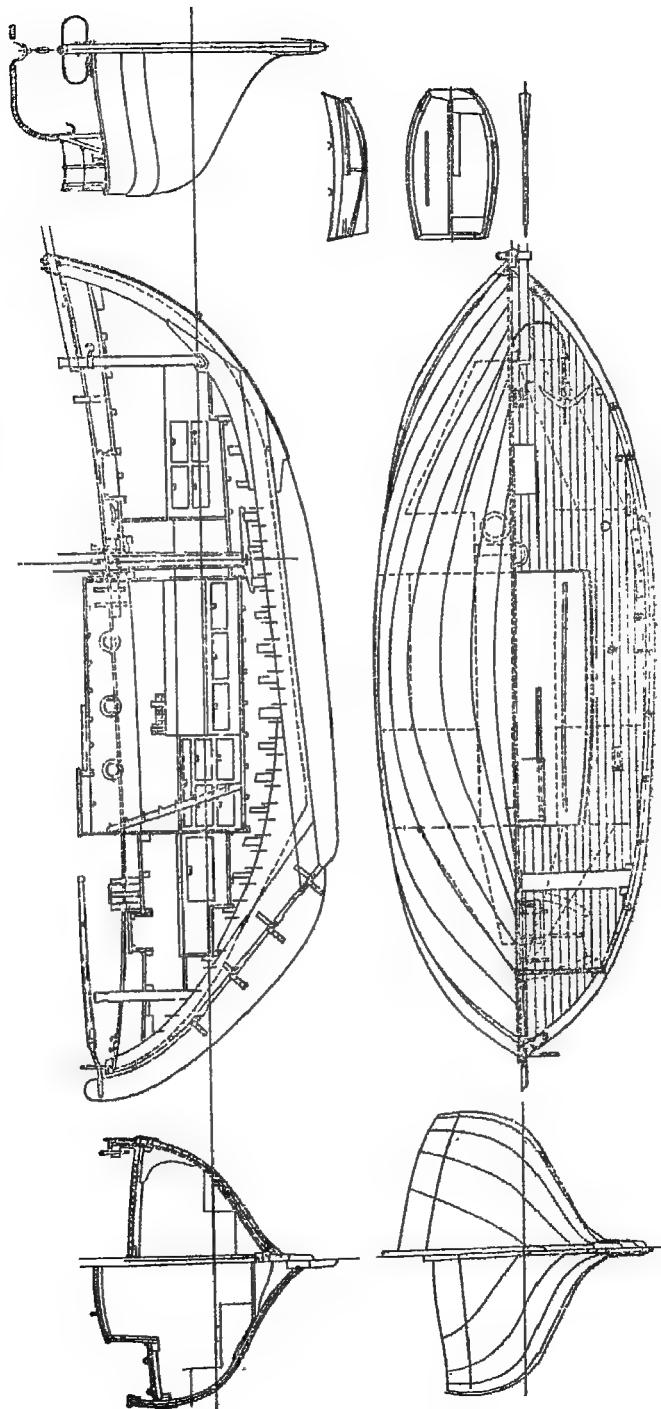
When planning my new boat I had very precise notions concerning her form. I have a predilection for the Norwegian types, and the creations of Colin Archer seem to me to approach perfection. I had carefully studied the records of the great crossings made in small boats by my predecessors. I have already mentioned *Spray* and *Firecrest*. *Anahita* was too much of a yacht for my liking, too little of the deep-sea type, although her owner, Captain Louis Bernicot, had made one of the finest voyages round the world and should, by Slocum’s standards, be accounted one of the great masters of circumnavigation. *Islander* of Harry Pidgeon was too ugly for my taste, and too light. On the other hand, a hull-form like that of the admirable *Teddy* of Erling Tambs fascinated me.

I had no plan at my disposal that entirely satisfied me, and I did not feel like risking my hand at one. My obvious course was to consult an experienced naval architect, but I have always had my doubts about these naval experts: in general they know a lot but they usually overlook a lot too. And that can become a serious matter on a long voyage singlehanded: the lone sailor cannot afford mistakes, and even less can he afford mediocrity. About Dervin, whose plans had long been familiar to me, I had no such qualms. He was an architect who had gone sailing, who had owned boats and even a shipbuilding yard. Architects

SAIL PLAN
Showing mainsail, topsail,
staysail and No. 2 jib



LINES AND ACCOMMODATION PLAN



DESCRIPTION OF KURUN

who design ships without ever having experienced the rough and tumble of sea life should be approached warily, which was not the case with Dervin.

I had often discussed sea-going vessels and long voyages with him when I had my first cutter. We did not always agree. He had remarked on one occasion, 'It's rank folly to want to do anything more than coastal navigation with a boat the size of yours.' I did not tell him all I wanted my new boat for, and the plan he made of her was headed 'fishing-vessel'.

Kurun is of a Norwegian type with the following specifications:

Length overall	33 ft.
Length on the water-line	27 ft. 10 in.
Beam maximum	11 ft. 10 in.
Beam on the water-line	10 ft. 8 in.
Draught	5 ft. 4 in.
Displacement	8.5 tons.
Cast keel	1.87 tons.

After the trials, *Kurun* was made to draw less. On the voyage, with all stores on board, with a full load of victuals and water, the draught approximated 5 ft. 9 in., which corresponds to a water displacement of two tons more than had been expected.

The hull is powerful, strong and endowed with a great initial stability and a good reserve of buoyancy. When under sail the cutter is stiff to the strong breezes, ships very little water and her movements are smooth. A long keel and a balance of lines are the basic elements of good stability for a long voyage—an important point.

She is decked right over and constitutes a watertight caisson when all apertures are hermetically closed. The apertures are limited to two hatches, forward and aft respectively, and the companion way to the cabin. This cabin has been kept as small as possible: in length 10 ft. 3 in., leaving gangways of 2 ft. 4½ in. wide. The deck has one characteristic which is unusual in small yachts: the absence of a cockpit.

A cockpit creates an unaesthetic discontinuity of deck, as well as decreasing its strength and at the same time reducing the inner space used for accommodation. I adopted a simple solution: a bench, which has the advantage that the man at the tiller is already on deck ready for manoeuvring, instead of having to clamber out of the cockpit. And, added to this, the deck is clear at the stern for stowing the pram and the shore-legs which it would not be practicable to have elsewhere.

The pram (6 ft. by 3 ft. 8 in.) was also designed by Dervin. I had improved it considerably by adding to the freeboard at the bow and so increasing its sheer.

The deck is surrounded by a bulwark 11½ in. high, indispensable

DESCRIPTION OF KURUN

both for the safety of the crew and for preventing movables from being washed overboard.

The rigging is classical: the traditional gaff-rigged cutter. The height of the mast has been reduced to a minimum: 30 ft. above the deck. With four $\frac{1}{2}$ in. shrouds on each side, two stays for twin staysails in addition to the usual forestay, the cutter is unlikely to be dismasted. There are no runners. For a long voyage, the rigging should be simple and very sturdy.

Many people have laughed at her long jibboom, 10 ft. without stay, but the jib, thus tacked very far out, has a remarkable balancing effect, especially when the wind is on a quarter. In the Pacific, I experimented with a long bamboo pole to serve as a flying jibboom which projected twice as far. A small jib set flat on the end of it allowed the cutter to keep her course with tiller lashed in a quartering breeze, an experiment not without interest.

I had made several drawings of different ways of making use of the available space below deck, deciding on the one that was the simplest and most practical. There is often a tendency to clutter up small yachts, rendering life on board most uncomfortable. As my boat was to be my only abode for many years, I aimed at making her as comfortable as possible, thinking not only of life in a harbour, which is one thing, but also of life at sea, which is another.

A hull like *Kurun's*, wide and spacious, was easily adapted to such an arrangement, and I deliberated on how to make the cabin as large as possible. I reached a solution: two partitions, each with a doorway (actual doors are always a nuisance on board small craft), were to divide the space in three. The central space was to be the cabin proper, 12 ft. 9 in. long by 6 ft. 1 in. high, under the beams of the cabin top.

On going below, the galley is on the starboard side, the chart table on the port side; then two symmetrical bunks of 6 ft. 4 in. by 2 ft. 8 in. Above the space for the water-casks, at the foot of the bunks, is a spacious clothes locker to port, and a large dresser to starboard. Along-side each bunk runs a wide shelf with lockers and an alcove.

The chart table is fixed and has a drawer large enough for the charts to lie flat. I had worked it out so that everything needed is at hand: writing materials, documents and instruments; the binnacle watch, barometer, chronometer (on a folding stand with a sliding panel), and so on. Each article has its definite place. The telescope can, from its position, be reached directly from the deck without my having to go down into the cabin. Frosted glass prevents strong shadow on the table, and the hand bearing compass, fixed to the wall, can be consulted for checking the course without my having to move. The steering compass, which can be read from on deck through a rectangular pane of glass on the after end of the cabin top, can also be consulted from below.

DESCRIPTION OF *KURUN*

Another compass, reversed, is placed above the captain's bunk, allowing him to follow the course without getting up.

The galley is opposite the chart table, and consists of a reasonably complete though simple dresser which makes it possible for plates, cups, glasses and bottles in current use to be safely cleared away, and a small sink that empties directly into the sea and is placed under the small semi-rotary Japy pump which draws water from the tanks. Cooking is done on a stove of the Primus type, fixed on gimbals so that it is possible to cook in any weather—a very important consideration.

The forepeak and the store-room in the stern both contain two long and wide symmetrical frames that are used as racks. Beneath them are large boxes and drawers. These two compartments are reserved for the boat stores: sailwork, tools, spares and materials for repairs in the bows, and food-stores in the stern.

For order and comfort, I provided the interior with plenty of large drawers: thirty-one, to be exact. In them I can stow things away properly without muddle. In any case, everything should have its place on board ship so that at all times you can go straight to what you need without hesitation.

The lavatory is placed at the foot of the mast, facing the bow.

In the space available below the floor are kept anchors, chains, paint, the cellar, a few articles of food, and ballast.

APPENDIX B

SAILING WITH HELM UNATTENDED

IT is not possible to discuss here every question concerning the navigation of *Kurun* and life on board, but for those who might wish to study certain technical aspects of my voyage, it is essential to know the main problem with which I was faced, i.e. the possibility of having the boat steer herself with no one at the helm.

The systems I evolved presuppose certain necessary qualities in the boat, and particularly in her hull design. We all know that a sailing boat possesses to a lesser or greater degree the ability to keep to her course, i.e. that when she follows a course with all sails set, it is necessary at more or less frequent intervals to make use of the helm to keep her on her set course.

From that point of view, the majority of modern yachts are disappointing; and there is nothing surprising in that, for their architects have concentrated their attention on very different qualities, namely speed and the ability to sail close to the wind. In any case, the yachtsman who never spends more than a few days running in his boat, and then rarely alone, takes a natural pleasure in being at the helm.

For the singlehanded navigator, on the other hand, it is impossible to be at the helm all the time, apart from which, he will take great pleasure in seeing his boat, entirely unaided, follow a set course for days.

One of the elements of this ability to stay on the course is the length of the keel; but there are others, such as the balance of design, and the sails, though the latter element seems to be the least important and is, in any case, the only one that can be modified.

The extraordinary ability of Slocum's *Spray* to sail without help from the helm has always been a matter of wonder to me. The boat of this superlative sailor could keep to her course in any wind without special arrangements. I have never heard of any other boat that possessed this amazing quality. I am certain that Slocum, when rebuilding his old *Spray*, had not foreseen this result and that chance favoured his work.

Kurun has the ability to stay on her course well, a quality I deliberately aimed at when evolving her plans, but, alas, she does not compare in this respect with her illustrious predecessor, and I have to have recourse to all kinds of subterfuges to obtain the same results.

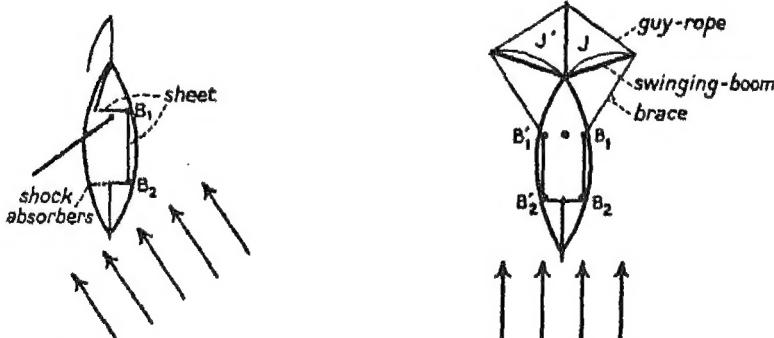
The reactions of any boat varying according to the nature of the wind, I shall analyse the three main circumstances that each demand a solution of their own.

SAILING WITH HELM UNATTENDED

I. *Sailing close-hauled.* Nearly all sailing boats keep to course without difficulty when sailing close to the wind, with the exception of yachts built for racing only. *Kurun* is particularly docile close to the wind. It is merely a question of sheets (hauling the sails more or less aft) and of the position of the tiller. The exact disposition depends on the force of the wind and the state of the sea. Through practice, this disposition becomes a matter of intuition. This holds good from close-hauled to reaching.

II. *Sailing with the wind on the quarter.* With a light wind and a fine sea, by liberally easing the main sheet and sheeting flat at least one head sail (provided a large jib is used), it is possible to keep the boat on her course with the wind on the quarter. It is not possible to do so with the wind right astern. But as soon as the wind freshens on the quarter, it is no longer possible to achieve balance unless a flying jibboom is used, which tends to be clumsy by reason of its length. This problem, for which I had no solution when I set out, I solved gracefully when I was near the Fiji Islands. I generalized this solution after I had left Port Moresby and gradually perfected it.

The principle is very simple. The boat carries her normal sails, the boom well out, but the jib sheeted flat as for sailing close-hauled in order to contribute to stability on the course. Thus the boat cannot keep to her course with the tiller lashed, but automatic steering is achieved by means of the staysail. This staysail, rigged on a boom and hauled not quite aft is attached to the tiller by means of its sheet, which passes to windward through the blocks B_1 and B_2 . This sheet exerts a certain pull on the helm, which is counteracted by rubber shock absorbers placed to leeward.



Let us suppose that the boat is following her course, well balanced, on the starboard tack in a quartering wind.

(a) *The boat luffs.* At that moment, the angle of incidence of the wind in the staysail increases, the pressure on that sail therefore increases,

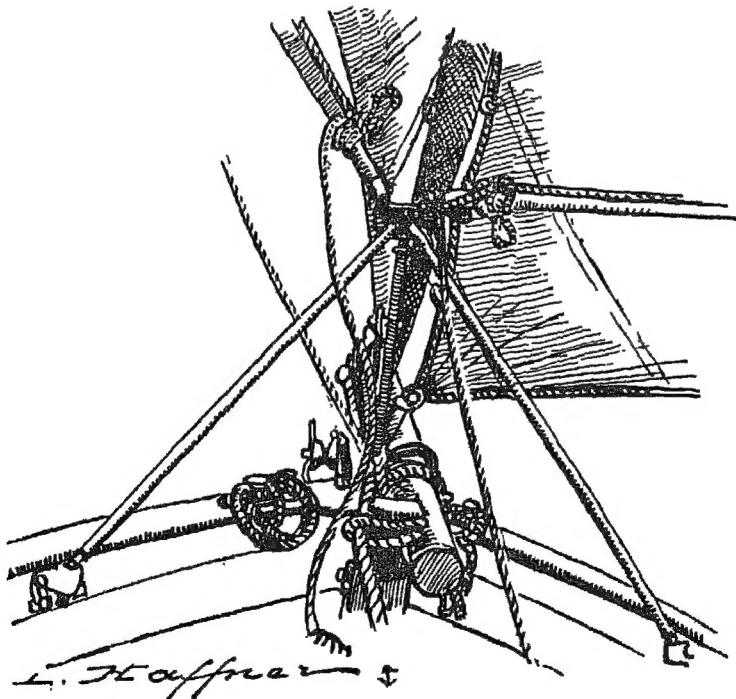
SAILING WITH HELM UNATTENDED

and the pull on the sheet correspondingly increases. As the tension of the shock absorbers remains constant, the tiller moves to starboard and the boat falls off to return to her set course.

(b) *The boat falls off.* In these circumstances, the angle of incidence of the wind in the storm-jib decreases, and the pull of the sheet on the tiller decreases correspondingly. That means that the steady pressure of the shock absorbers prevails, the tiller moves over to port and the boat luffs to return to her original course.

This method proved excellent with a wind from about two points abaft the beam up to three quarters abaft; wind right astern renders it practically impossible without risk of gybing.

III. *Wind right astern.* The system I used was inspired by Marin-Marie. It consists of using two staysails of identical size, projecting respectively to starboard and to port by means of spinnaker-booms, sufficiently eased off so that the booms are angled slightly forward. Theoretically, the bisector of this angle must be in the direction of the wind.



Each of the booms is linked to the tiller by a brace passing through blocks (B_1 and B_2 in the second diagram opposite).

SAILING WITH HELM UNATTENDED

Let us suppose the boat runs well balanced, with a wind dead astern, the sails symmetrically eased. The pull of each brace on the tiller is therefore equal. Suppose now that the boat yaws to starboard; the angle of incidence of the wind in the starboard staysail J is bound to increase, whereas that in the port sail J' will correspondingly decrease. The pressure exerted by the wind on J will be greater than on J'. The starboard brace will therefore pull harder on the tiller than will the port brace, and the boat will return to her set course.

The principle involved is exceedingly simple. In practice, of course, its application demands very careful adjustment.

First of all, the circle described by each boom end must be centred on the stay of these sails to ensure a harmonious rotation of the whole. Moreover, the point at which the booms are fixed must be sufficiently high to prevent them lifting.

Many variations of this system have been applied in practice with greater and lesser degrees of success. It must be realized that certain arrangements with sails placed along the mast are not satisfactory, for their sheeting is then limited and does not allow the boat to sail with the wind anywhere but dead astern.

In the course of my cruise, I read a well-illustrated article in some foreign magazine about a crossing of the Atlantic made in this way. After having thus crossed the ocean, the boat had arrived at a point several hundred miles from her intended destination, and the crew had to resort to the original rig to finish the journey.

The system of twin staysails allows one to sail in a quartering wind with the wind coming up to four points from astern, though results are better with a wind further aft. In any case, the further away one gets from a wind dead astern, the more the windward boom tends to lift: a serious drawback, all the more marked as the angle of the stays with the mast is of great importance.

As it was, the arrangement I had made in *Kurun* was not perfect and could well have been improved upon. Unfortunately, I knew only the principle of Marin-Marie's system. I was as ignorant of its details as I was of the conclusions he had drawn from it. Had I known more of these, I should have been saved a lot of fumbling. If I were to rig *Kurun* afresh for sailing with the wind dead astern, I should use stays fixed as high as possible.

To rig twin jibs takes several hours. Hence the system should be used only when a long run with wind dead astern is assured. Moreover, it must not be forgotten that with the twin staysails, the boat's movements are prescribed within fairly small limits.

The braces chafe considerably, however much tallow is used. Their life can be prolonged by turning them end for end, but even so, they are unlikely to last for a longer time than the stretch of one long crossing.

